

# THE MASTER BEAST

A · D · 1888 - 2020

HORACE W. C. NEWTE

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THE MASTER BEAST



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BEING A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE  
RUTHLESS TYRANNY INFLICTED ON  
THE BRITISH PEOPLE BY SOCIALISM

A.D. 1888-2020

BY HORACE W. C. NEWTE



LONDON  
REBMAN LIMITED  
129 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.


1907

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# THE MASTER BEAST

## CHAPTER I

### INITIATION

It's a strange experience to write of things that occurred to me considerably over a hundred years ago, but such is my privilege or misfortune. By what even now seems to be a miraculous happening I am in a position to tell of my life when I was a youth of eighteen a hundred and thirty years back.

The advantage or otherwise—otherwise as the course of this narrative will show—of this experience that has befallen me is that I am able to note the stupendous changes which have taken place in the interval since I lost consciousness on a certain August afternoon of 1911 in a half basement in the King's Road, Chelsea.

Excepting the century that witnessed the change from horse to steam locomotion, with the developments that followed from the application of steam and electricity to the uses of everyday life, an interval of a hundred years has made small difference in the outward appearance of things.

New houses here and there, an alteration in the style of dress, would be pretty well all that an observer would notice were it possible for him to be transferred from one century to the next.

But the change from the robust old age of the nineteenth century to the adolescence of the twenty-first has produced such startling changes that I am impelled to set them forth.

The interval between the old life and my present existence has seen the transformation of a society founded on individualistic principles to that raised upon a communistic basis : the old order of things has been wiped out as if it had never been. Socialism reigns in its stead, Socialism naked and unashamed. The change is not so amazing as would appear at first sight, as in the closing years of my old life Socialism was fast becoming a power to be reckoned with. The occasion for wonder is in the vast gulf which lies between its promises and performance ; between the fair future it foreshadowed and the ruthless, shameful, bestial chains of tyranny which it has riveted on the lives of its dupes.

In the old days it was the fashion for Socialists to assert that the heaven of the rich was made from the hell of the poor.

It is now no exaggeration to say that the paradise of the unscrupulous is founded on the blood and tears of the victims of Socialism.

Now for my story.



Before describing the most obvious features of the new life, which I will do presently, it might be as well to say something of the old, more particularly how it came about that I was projected from the past into the present.

A word of apology would not be out of place for any errors in style or grammar of which I may be guilty.

I am surrounded by spies who would not hesitate to denounce me to the disciplinary powers were I suspected of writing anything approaching a true description of the life about me, in which case I should be hardly dealt with. No inquisitor of the persecuting days of the old Romish Church could be more ruthless in the discharge of his duties than the emissaries of those who rule in the new ordering of things.

My first introduction to Socialism was on a certain spring sabbath in 1888.

I was returning to Hammersmith Terrace, where I then lived, from a walk to the round pond in Kensington Gardens, when I was attracted by a small crowd gathered about a short, thick-set man who was haranguing those about him at the top of his voice in Bradmore Street, Hammersmith. He was a missionary of Socialism. As I joined the crowd this man told us, and as far as I could then see proved, that the evils of the world were entirely owing to the monopoly by landlords and capitalists of the land and the means of production, which had

been stolen from their rightful possessors, the people. Once these were restored to their proper owners, heaven would be realized on earth, and more to the same effect.

No one who lived in those days with eyes to see and hearts to feel could be insensible to the conditions under which a large percentage of the toiling millions lived. There had been many soul-searing descriptions of how the white slaves of England worked in order to keep a roof over their heads, and to provide sufficient food to fit them for the daily task of profit earning. I had, as who had not then? read of the sweating dens so vividly described by the pens of writers who had made it their business to visit such places.

Accounts of the conditions under which children (half-timers) still worked in factories, together with stories of the deadly nature of the work on which thousands of men were engaged, pleaded in the columns of newspapers for abolition or mitigation. If one forgot the havoc worked by alien immigration, free trade, and improvident, early marriages among the working classes, it would almost seem, as the Socialist lecturer declared in his peroration, as if the heaven of the rich were built on the hell of the poor. Other speakers followed who were more or less convincing. I bought, for a penny, the current number of the *Commonweal*, also one or two sixpenny publications on Socialism, from a man who wore a sealskin cap.

I read these in the afternoon—to be converted with the hasty irresponsibility of youth to the gospel of Socialism. Henceforth I was a regular attendant at the Sunday morning meetings held in Bradmore Street. The gathering usually numbered about twenty, but when a particularly fervent speaker was turned on, quite a hundred would stop to listen ; those would quickly melt should a humdrum orator succeed the man who had attracted them. Anxiously I used to count the crowd and watch the faces of chance listeners in order to see if they were likely to stay and hear more of the gospel that was being expounded. There were many alternations in my mind from hope to despair on those far-away Sunday mornings. One speaker I dreaded. He had a fervent spirit, but he had not the gift of the gab. He mumbled his words ; he got mixed with his periods ; he was just the man to disperse those chance listeners who may have gathered before he spoke. One Sunday morning, a month after my conversion to Socialism, it seemed that this man's halting speech would never come to an end. Those who stood about him, ready to take his place, were fidgeting, not so much because they were anxious to speak as that they could see the disastrous effects which the speaker had upon his audience. I, also, was acutely sensitive to the effect of the man's hapless words. In a state not far removed from distraction, I was wondering when he would stop, when I was attracted by a man who had just joined the little group of

speakers. He was tall, slight, narrow-chested ; he wore a Jaeger suit, a soft hat, and, although the day was cloudless, he carried an umbrella. It was not his unusual clothes so much as his face which attracted me. This was very pale and fringed with dull red whiskers. Its expression was kindly and at the same time merciless. It attracted as much as it repelled. He suggested to me one who might have been an instigator and functionary of the great French Revolution. I pictured him standing on the scaffold watching the heads drop into the basket, sympathizing for the victims, yet stilling his ruth by reflecting that they were necessary sacrifices on the altar of liberty. At last, when the dull speaker had reduced his audience to a miserable fraction of its former proportions, he stopped. Then the red-whiskered, pale-faced man stepped forward to address the attenuated gathering. His voice was pleasant to the ear ; better than this was the judicial coherency of his argument. "It was all owing to the robbery of the land by the landlords," he urged, that the times were out of joint. "People by accumulating in cities increased the value of the land ; this spelt unearned increment which was filched by its possessors, in the name of the law, from the people to whom it rightly belonged." The man with the appealing voice and the calm, judicial manner was Mr. Bernard Shaw, who afterwards won fame as a wit and playwright.

When he had done, many in the crowd that his

eloquence had attracted applauded the speaker's effort.

"Jolly good !" said a voice in my ear.

I turned to see a stoutish, puffy-faced youth of perhaps my own age, whom I had noticed at the Sunday morning gathering. He was carelessly clothed and wore his hair long ; a prominent red tie distracted attention from an unshaven chin and a mouth the lips of which refused to meet.

"Jolly good, wasn't it ?" he asked.

"Rather," I replied.

"He's Shaw. Know him quite well. He nodded to me when he met me the other day. I believe in Shaw."

"I never heard of him before to-day."

"Eh !" Here he looked at me with inquiry in his eyes.

I repeated my remark.

"I say, are you a 'So.' ?"

"I'm a Socialist, if that's what you mean."

"Ah !" he sighed as if relieved. "Believe in blood-red revolution and all that ?"

"Sometimes."

"H'm ! Ever go to Kelmscott House ?"

"Where's that ?"

"Oh, I say, you are a rotten 'So.' It's where we leaders of Socialistic thought meet and debate on Sunday evenings. I know 'em all."

"Do you ?" I asked enviously.

"Would you care to go there to-night ?"

“Rather.”

“Ah! I think we can be friends. What’s your name?”

“John Weston Trenchard,” I replied.

“Mine’s Walter Bailey Podmore. Which way do you go?”

As Podmore lived in Ravenscourt Park, and as the meeting was breaking up (chance audiences usually got restive when one o’clock, the time at which public-houses were then opened on Sunday, approached), we arranged to walk together till I should leave him.

Instead of going the nearest way, which would have been along King Street, Hammersmith, I remember Podmore, who seemed to take charge of my body as well as of my mind from the outset of our friendship, piloted me along a maze of by-lanes and side streets which just now were deserted.

As we walked we encountered the varying savoury odours which issued from pretty well nearly every house we passed.

“Pork-souled brutes!” declared Podmore angrily. “What do they care about the social revolution!”

“Perhaps they haven’t heard of it,” I suggested.

“And if they had! D’ye think they’d leave their Sunday gorging to listen to me, or William Morris, or Bernard Shaw?”

“I don’t suppose they would.”

Here Podmore stopped to indulge in a heated denunciation of the bourgeois, whom he denounced



as having a hereditary tendency to oppose Liberal leanings.

"As the people who live in these little streets seem to upset you, we'd better get into King Street," I suggested.

"Ah! I'd forgotten. It's all the fault of these beastly bourgeois. Anyone about?"

"I can't see anyone."

"Sure?" he asked, as he fumbled underneath his coat.

"Quite."

I wondered if Podmore were going to explode a bomb.

"Sure there's no policeman!"

"Certain."

My suspicion was strengthened as he commenced to undo his waistcoat, which certainly looked bulky,

"Look! look, quickly," he cried, as he pulled open his unbuttoned waistcoat.

I looked to see that he wore a red sash about his body.

"Isn't that something like?" he asked as he re-buttoned his waistcoat.

"Rather."

"I always wear it. But what time shall we meet to-night? I'm getting hungry."

That night I paid the first of many visits to Kelmscott Hall adjoining Kelmscott House in Hammer-smith Mall.

This hall looked as if it had once been a stable,

but had been adapted to the purpose for which it was now used. It adjoined a fine old red brick house which was eloquent of what would then be called middle-class comfort and respectability. Podmore was waiting outside.

"Hurry up," he cried. "They'll start in a minute. It's William Morris on 'Socialistic Ideals.' "

We entered the hall to find it indifferently filled with as curious a lot of men as it would then have been possible to find in London. Long-haired, unkempt, unwholesome, uncanny-looking, they seemed to me to be both strange and familiar. They sat on forms with which the body of the hall was filled, and talked, either in high or deep voices. Podmore and I took two vacant places at the end of the hall nearer to the door, when my attention was attracted by two red flags which were fastened to the wall on my left.

"Jolly fine ! aren't they ?" asked my companion, who had noticed the direction of my glance.

"Splendid."

"Wait," said Podmore, as he solemnly winked.

Immediately there came to my mind a vision of Podmore, bravely displaying his red sash, the while he waved a red flag upon the top of an extemporized barricade in King Street, Hammersmith.

I had little time for imaginative flights, as the next moment Podmore was pointing out the many socialistic celebrities dotted about the room.



Although he knew their names and achievements, he did not seem to know any of them personally. Presently a man who had been standing in the hall walked to the platform and called for order. Upon silence being obtained, he introduced the lecturer in a few well-chosen words, after which a thick-set figure, clad in a blue serge suit, stood up to be greeted by applause which was considerably reinforced by Podmore's efforts with his hands and feet.

William Morris, to whom belonged the hall and the comfortable red-brick house next door, spoke. It was an earthly paradise that the lecturer declared would be established if Socialists had their way with the reordering of the bad, old world. Poverty, with all its concomitant evils of crime, misery, and disease, would be wiped out, to be replaced by order, plenty, content—together with opportunities for all to indulge in a limitless culture. The lecturer concluded by saying what a glorious, happy place the world would be when mankind lived up to the socialistic ideal—"From each man according to his capacity : to each man according to his needs." The words of the poet stirred his hearers to enthusiasm ; applause, which was led by Podmore, continued for many moments after the speaker had stopped.

Could Mr. Morris have foreseen the foul tyranny which the practice of his tenets has created !

A haphazard discussion followed the lecture, in

which the speaker, who had an unhappy facility for dispersing audiences, took part. Whilst he was stumbling and blundering with his words it occurred to me how it was that the uncouth-looking men about me seemed dimly familiar; they were the type of man that filled vegetarian restaurants into which I had once or twice strayed by mistake to be struck by the kind of person who forgathered there.

The discussion languished until a dark, keen-faced man, who had been intently listening to all that had been going on, rose to ask if he might say a few words from an individualistic point of view. He was told that criticism was welcomed, also that many well-known Socialists had been recruited from the ranks of their opponents.

The keen-faced man began by admitting the justice of Socialism in the abstract. "Were it not for the human factor, and the dominating purposes of nature, a system satisfactory to all might be established on present-day conditions, which last had been inevitably evolved from pre-existing circumstances. But as the obsession of nature cannot be eliminated, it must be taken into account," he said. The speaker then contended that the human race is as ruthlessly governed by natural laws as is any species of animals, plants, fishes, birds, or insects; that nature produces more of any given genus than can possibly find subsistence, and the pitiless competition for existence not only cuts off the weaklings, but strengthens the survivors.

Then, amidst murmurs of disapproval, he went on to say that in most herds or flocks was what farmers called a master beast, who took more than his fair share of food and generally did himself well at the expense of the others. He contended that that master beast was entitled to the good things it monopolized on account of the superior courage and strength it exhibited. Then he declared that mankind had always been dominated by a master beast. Sometimes it was called Divine right ; at others a priesthood or, again, tyranny of a revolutionary republic ; now it seemed to be capitalism that held the world in its grip ; to-morrow it would probably be democracy ; the day after it might be Socialism. But, whatever shibboleth was top dog, it got there owing to the inherent strength of its cause, and maintained its proud position so long as it fell in with nature's law, which was the survival of the fittest for time and place as occasion arose. Directly it was unworthy of its prominence it was immediately lost. He declared that the laws of nature were immutable ; also that Socialism, in preparing to go counter to these, was only looking for trouble. That, in seeking to establish a condition of things, such as Mr. Morris had suggested, it was as hopeless a task as attempting to make the world turn from East to West. The only means of bringing about a condition of Socialism would be by the exercise of as pitiless a tyranny as the world had ever known.

Then the speaker sat down amidst a silence that could almost be heard.

How amazed I should have been if I had then known that I should have intimate acquaintance with the truth of the speaker's words.

When Mr. William Morris stood up to combat the assertions of his opponent, Podmore nudged me as much as to say, "See what a smashing he'll get."

As well as I remember, I was a trifle let down by the poet's reply, although I would not dare to acknowledge such thoughts to myself.

He admitted that human nature, as we at present knew it, left much to be desired, but how much of this defectiveness was due to the oppression the many had suffered at the hands of the few? Also that this power had debauched the tyrants and had debased the slaves. Human beings were not brute beasts, but were capable of infinite development under new industrial conditions, till at last they would nearly approach to that socialistic ideal of mankind which would enable its principles to be practised until the end of time.

One or two others among the audience asked questions, but I did not listen. My imagination had been fired by the dream-world which Mr. Morris's words had conjured into being.

"This earth would indeed be a paradise," I reflected, "if everything should come to pass as the poet had foretold. Misery, crime, meanness, self-seeking, vice, all to be as if they never were. Each,

instead of living for himself, as now, was to devote himself to the common weal : the world would indeed be the nearest conceivable approximation to society as conceived by the Author of the Sermon on the Mount. Then men and women would be as gods and goddesses " (it never occurred to me that such eminent folk demand slaves as a condition of their greatness), "meet dwellers in the paradise provided by nature." If it could only be !

When I got out into the night with Podmore the stars were softly set overhead. They seemed to brood on the world with a deep peace as if the ideals of those who longed for the betterment of humanity were at last realized.

## CHAPTER II

### DISILLUSION

PODMORE and I became fast friends—that is, if friendship describes an association in which I was a satellite to what I believed to be his superior mental equipment. We would take long walks on the Surrey side towpath of the Thames, then a very different place to what it became in later years, when arm-in-arm we would discuss the good time in store for the world when the economic revolution was established. I had great faith in Podmore—indeed, almost as much as he had in himself. But for all his vagaries I believe that he was sincere, and would have accounted it high honour if he had been permitted to give his life for the cause near to his heart.

What fine-sounding words and phrases rolled off our tongues as we walked by the indifferent river ! Propaganda, proletariat, unearned increment, and such like were the commonplace of our talk.

Podmore was qualifying to be a veterinary surgeon ; he lived with a somewhat eccentric aunt in a stucco-faced house in a depressing terrace, the

ends of which were decorated with two plaster eagles, in a district then known as Ravenscourt Park. His enthusiasm for Socialism must have sadly interfered with his studies, to which he gave intermittent attention.

I will not dwell upon other incidents in those far-off days which, although of moment to myself, are alien to the purposes of this story, but will at once say that a short while after my whole-hearted conversion to Socialism my faith in its doctrines waned. A variety of trifling causes produced this effect.

One Saturday evening I came upon a man, who took a prominent part in Socialist gatherings, who, on account of intoxication, was being helped home by two friends the while he sang ribald songs. I had always looked up to Socialists as being above the common weaknesses of humanity; the incident jarred me not a little.

I was now in the habit of addressing meetings, usually on the Surrey side of the Thames, where I was brought in contact with a Mr. Bennett, who was a fluent speaker. Bennett was vain of his appearance and parts. When he was going to speak he curled his hair and wore a new white bow tie; he was impatient when anyone else was lecturing; once set going, he never stopped unless he could possibly help it, no matter who else might have been previously announced to speak.

I always had the idea that his voice to him was the sweetest music in the world. He waxed more



than usually eloquent when he dwelt on the universal brotherhood which would be established when the gospel of Socialism was generally accepted. One Sunday morning, on leaving a successful meeting in his company, it came on to rain, at which he pressed me to go home and dine with him. Upon my accepting his invitation, he took me to his home, where I was introduced to his wife, a winsome-looking woman, and his daughter, a pretty, alert girl. Mother and child were laughing when we made our appearance, but at sight of the orator the laughter faded from their faces. I soon discovered the cause. The Socialist preacher looked upon his wife and daughter with contempt, as being unable to appreciate his mental eminence. He hardly ever addressed them, and then only when necessary. This was my first experience of the gulf that lies between preaching and practice.

About this time Podmore fell in love. For hours on end he would talk of the perfections of the loved one, his raptures, fears, and hopes.

Upon my hinting, as I occasionally did, that this love fever was by way of being heresy to the faith we professed, he would look at me uncomfortably to say :

“I shall come back to it sure enough after I’ve married Bertha and settled down.”

A few days after Podmore’s betrothal to his Bertha a debate on Socialism was announced to take place between William Morris, on the one hand,



and a dissenting minister, a Mr. MacBeth, on the other. Podmore and I made a point of attending the contest, which took place in the chapel of which Mr. MacBeth was pastor. The debate was thinly attended ; at that time Socialism did not excite the interest it aroused in later years.

Mr. Morris had the easiest task in the world. The minister was long-winded, and continually lost the thread of his arguments, whereas the Socialist had his subject at his fingers' ends ; also his bluff manner of speaking took the fancy of the audience. Podmore and I rejoiced at the triumph of our cause. The former, I remembered, almost blistered the palms of his hands with the vehemence of his applause. Then, to our surprise, the keen-faced man who had tackled Mr. Morris on the occasion of my first visit to Kelmscott Hall got up.

He said that he had been dipping into socialistic literature to discover that Socialists, in order to eradicate the instinct of acquiring property in human nature, had decided that, if ever they secured the direction of affairs, all women were to be held in common ; also that children directly they were born were to be taken from their mothers to be brought up by the State, thus eliminating the natural wish of a parent to acquire a sufficiency for his offspring.

When the keen-faced man sat down the men in the audience, most of whom looked like fathers of families, eagerly awaited Mr. Morris's reply.

He rose to declare that, in the main, such was the intention of Socialists, at which the fat was in the fire. The fathers of families rose as one man, as if in protest of the last speaker's declarations. William Morris folded his arms and assumed an attitude that was meant to be inflexible, but which was also a trifle absurd.

The protestants in the hall all spoke at once, and accompanied their words with violent gesticulations.

But with dominating voice the keen-faced man quelled the storm ; he obtained silence before directing his oratorical batteries upon the Socialist. With impassioned voice he declaimed against the folly and wickedness of all that was embraced by those proposals. He declared that the family was but the State in miniature, and that, where the former existed, patriotism, self-denial, anxiety for the good of the common weal were fostered ; that the influence of the family made for much that was admirable in civilization, and had turned love from an animal desire into the permanent thing it frequently was. Then, carried away by the emotion possessing him, he denounced the criminal inhumanity of Socialists for the recklessness with which they would throw away all that mankind had so laboriously striven for in order to attain its goal of justice and liberty. He concluded by saying that, if these proposals affecting women and children were put into practice, the blood of the martyrs in the cause of humanity had been shed in vain ; that it was throwing the

precious metals of our civilization into the melting-pot, reckless of what useless and dangerous hotch-potch might result ; that, careless of consequences, Socialists counselled the abandoning of secure footholds which had been hewn with the sweat of blood and tears from the bedrock of tyranny and wrongdoing.

This denunciation was greeted with demonstrations of delight from most of those present. I was curious to hear Mr. Morris's reply. To my surprise, and not a little to my disgust, he lost his temper. He denounced the speaker as being put up by his (Mr. Morris's) enemies to upset him, and more to the same effect. Upon the other declaring that he was nothing of the kind, but merely a medical practitioner, who chanced to be attracted by the regenerating promises of Socialism, the meeting broke up.

Podmore was silent as we walked in the direction of our homes.

"What do you think of it all ?" I asked, or words to that effect.

"A pity my pal Shaw wasn't there. Bernard Shaw would have pummelled that chap in two ticks."

"There was a lot in what that doctor chap said."

"He didn't know what he was talking about," declared Podmore with suspicious heat. "He wore brown boots with a top-hat."

In those days this was an incongruity of attire which reflected adversely on the wearer.

"Eh !"

“No chap who does that——”

“But fancy you, a professed Socialist, caring what people wear.”

“If I don’t mind, women do. Bertha’s always going for me about my long hair and red tie.”

“If the doctor is right, women won’t be of much account in the good time coming,” I remarked.

“That’s because they’re not anything like my Bertha.”

“But if they were !”

“That’s impossible.”

“If, for the sake of argument, they were !”

“Eh ! Oh, men would jolly soon see there wasn’t any hanky-panky.”

“Then that means it would be all up with Socialism,” I suggested.

“Nothing of the kind. The common-sense of the majority would do what was best for the happiness of the greater number.”

The next time I met Podmore I noticed that he had cut his hair and had abandoned the red tie of Socialism for another of the ordinary Philistine hue.

Some weeks later Podmore’s aunt died, when her nephew found himself possessed of freeholds, the income from which would enable him to abandon all thoughts of earning his living as a veterinary surgeon, and to marry his Bertha as soon as may be. It was with glad eyes that he told me of his good fortune.

“What about Socialism ?” I asked, curious to

hear what he would say now he was a man of property.

“What about it !” he asked uneasily.

“Now you’ll be able to devote all your time and money to the cause.”

“All jolly fine ! What about Bertha ?”

“Under Socialism you’d have to give up your property to the State ; indeed, your aunt would have had none to leave.”

“Well, we’re not under Socialism,” he remarked sullenly, as he produced a new silver cigarette-case.

“But,” I persisted, “according to Socialism, to live on unearned increment is to be no better than a thief.”

“Eh !”

“You’ve said so yourself times out of number.”

“That was then. Look here ! My uncle worked hard to make his little pile for my aunt, who was my mother’s sister. And when my aunt died she left it to me because I was nearer to her than anyone else in the world ; so it seems to me that, if Socialism would take it away, it’s Socialism that’s the thief, so there !”

“Is it you talking ?” I gasped.

“Wait till you’re in love and have some one to leave you enough to get married on,” he retorted.

So much for Podmore.

His defection, together with the other trifling incidents I have noted, were, as well as I remember, the tiny streamlets that, percolating into the foundations of my socialistic faith, commenced the destruction that the experiences of later days confirmed.

The following years of my life, having little to do with Socialism, will be quickly passed over. More or less thrown upon the world, I was more concerned with wresting a living from the tightly clenched fists of fortune than with giving overmuch attention to communism. Although I lost touch with Socialism, its tenets infrequently recurred to my mind when I was able to discover how far its insistence on the altruistic capabilities of human nature squared with my experiences of many, often far removed, strata of the social formation. The more I saw of life, the more it seemed to me that Socialism would never prove acceptable to the majority of the "haves"; also, if forced upon these by physical force, or the power of the ballot-box, it would not prove workable. To begin with, it is an instinct of our being to acquire property in some form or another, and when obtained to hold fast to it, if not for ourselves, for those nearest to our hearts. It also seemed as if this zest for possession arose from the great fear of poverty, which was the direst calamity that could overtake one in the world under the old conditions of which I am now writing. It appeared, apart from the pleasure of fighting to improve one's position amongst those who cared for the fray, that this dislike of poverty, with all its concomitant ills, was the means by which hundreds of thousands who were naturally thriftless and lazy were compelled to lead hard-working, self-respecting lives; that toil, though often debasing, was nature's

chief means to ensure the continued predominance of the human species.

Another thing that much impressed me at the time, and which seemed to militate against the doctrines of Socialism, was the inherent snobbishness of the British, and the abiding happiness which people got from their indulgence in this trait.

England, at the time of which I write, was populated by many classes who had rigid systems of caste, designed to exclude all those who had not the passport of either birth or money as the case might be. From the highest to the very lowest there were innumerable social gradations, each separated from the one immediately below it by scarcely perceptible differences.

Gentlepeople, as they were then called (whose distinction of speech and manner was often a cloak for very ungentle conduct), lumped together all those they considered to be socially beneath them as "common," ignorant of the fact that the lower one descended in the social scale the more rigidly were the conditions of caste defined and observed.

It may be thought that this class exclusiveness was productive of much tribulation; the contrary is the case. While the operation of caste provided a source of happiness in giving every person some one to look down upon, the chance of mixing with those above them provided a goal to gain which each one's whole resources were often strained.

Many incidents of this caste feeling, which I per-



sonally chanced upon, would scarcely be believed. I have come across a woman in an Essex village who could not know her next-door neighbour because this person paid a halfpenny less for her suet than she did.

I have heard a man boast in a railway train that he wouldn't dream of knowing anyone "who lived in a thirty pound a year 'ouse." I also remember the wife of a city solicitor who literally pined away because she could not emulate the doings of her brother-in-law's vulgar wife, who was married to a successful outside broker.

Apart from personal experiences, evidences of this all-pervading snobbishness were everywhere for those who had eyes to see.

Middle-class people lived in ugly suburbs where, instead of the convenience of numbers, which were considered vulgar, the houses were known by ridiculously pretentious names.

Their favourite organs of the press abounded with descriptions of the dresses, habits, and doings of the great, which were all eagerly devoured by their readers, who were often better acquainted with the various ramifications of family intermarriages of the nobly born than were these last themselves. About August, September, and October these journals gave daily details of game-shooting prospects, although their readers had rarely seen a grouse, partridge, or pheasant outside the local poulterers' shops.



Paradoxical as it may appear, it was Radicals and their press who were the most keenly interested in the doings of the aristocracy ; of the years of which I write it became a commonplace of conversation to remark " how Radicals loved a lord."

It is interesting to note that the snobbishness of gentlepeople was almost always social ; that of the other classes (these being unable to boast of family connexions) was material. In those days many tongues and pens found employment in censoring this very British leaning ; these social castigators appeared to forget that there was a commendable aspect of this characteristic, inasmuch as snobbishness, in all its manifestations, argued a healthy egotism, pushfulness, and energy which were responsible for the individual success of Englishmen, and the amazing prosperity of their country as a whole, until it was ruined by circumstances that were foreseen but not provided for.

Why I have touched on this matter at some length is because the British, obtaining so much happiness from the practice of their pet foible, seemed the most stony ground on which to sow the seed of Socialism.

Its successes at the polls in the elections of 1906 came as a rude awakening to those, like myself, who believed that communism would never become a live force in this country. It became speedily evident to those who had ignored the existence of this new element in politics that it was a power to

be reckoned with. As an instance of the fears it excited may be mentioned the completeness with which the sympathizers with Socialism were routed at the County Council elections in 1907. The waste, corruption, and peculation which had distinguished public bodies managed, or rather mismanaged, by politicians with socialistic tendencies had warned people what to expect if further toleration were extended to those who preached the unlimited spoliation of the "haves" in order to endow the "have nots."

It was about this time that I heard from Podmore, whom I had lost sight of for some years. He was living at Dulwich; he enclosed with the photograph of his eldest boy a circular of the "Dulwich and Conterminous Suburbs Middle-class Defence League," of which he was honorary secretary. I noticed that he now signed his name "W. Bailey Podmore."

It would seem that in both our lives Socialism had been the political measles of our youth.

As by-elections succeeded each other it became more and more apparent that Socialism had secured an increasing hold upon the workers.

Its amazing growth was an ironic comment on the complacency of Free Traders, who never tired of denouncing Tariff Reformers for declaring that the absence of a judicious system of protection was ruining the country.

From curiosity I bought some of the socialistic

propaganda to discover if its pioneers had lighted upon any other than the stale arguments on which I had battened in the days of my youth. I found that there was a discreet silence on the subject of men holding all women in common, and separating parents from their children at the birth of the latter. Instead, there was no hint that the institutions of family or marriage were to be tampered with ; doubtless this matter was kept in the background in order not to scare the timid. There were two fresh arguments in favour of socialism.

The first was a list of eminent literary men, embracing the names of Tolstoi, Wells, and Zola, who had blessed communism, which benediction was looked upon as an invaluable asset in favour of this creed. These simple-minded Socialists overlooked the fact that a novelist's views on economics were about as valuable as a gardener's upon a question of trigonometry—even less so, inasmuch as a literary imagination develops one portion of an author's brain to the detriment of all other parts, making his opinion on matters foreign to his work of no value whatsoever.

The second argument which was repeatedly put forward was of less account than the first. It was contended that the Navy, the County Council, and the Post Office were all instances of the efficiency of State management.

Of the County Council's muddling and its reckless squandering of the ratepayers' money the least said

the better ; but the argument of the Navy and Post Office did not hold water for a moment, for this reason : although managed for the benefit of the State, they were run on strictly individualistic lines, inasmuch as promotion was by merit, and slackness in the performance of duties would mean loss of employment, with the consequence of being thrown on a glutted labour market.

As if there were not the spur of escape from want, professional emulation, and patriotic zeal to goad members of the two services in question, there was impulse to do well in order to provide for wife or children, all of which incentives—fear of poverty (which is truly a fountain of energy), pecuniary rewards, patriotic zeal, and concern for dear ones—would be wanting in a socialistic condition of life.

If an instance were wanted of how Socialists performed their work, an eloquent object lesson was supplied by the workmen in the French arsenals and dockyards, where the staff, Socialists almost to a man, is notorious for its sloth and inefficiency.

While Socialism bolstered its pretensions with such patently absurd arguments, those who were opposed to its tenets took counsel among themselves, and prepared to do battle with the enemy, all unconscious of the fact that in but a very few months the manhood of the nation, irrespective of its economic beliefs, would be fighting for dear life.

## CHAPTER III

### LATER YEARS

AT a time when men's minds were occupied with proclaiming or denying the glad tidings of Socialism it would almost seem as if the dread events which took place in 1909 were a terrible reminder that, although man proposes, nature disposes ; that, for all the high-falutin' notions mankind forms of its destiny, all that the forces that rule this world care about is to ensure the survival of the race that most approximates to their ideal of worthiness for this end.

At all times in the history of the world races and nations have risen to greatness in the face of (and perhaps because of) every obstacle which was put in the way of their eager steps. Once prosperity was attained, and the winners of the world's prizes waxed fat on their gains, an inevitable process of decay commenced, when the accumulated riches became so much spoil for an armed, adventurous race which recognized that the good things of this world are for the strong. For some time the rise of the German Empire to consideration and power had

been the cause of much uneasiness. In the face of innumerable difficulties the Germans had seen in which direction danger or prosperity lay ; with characteristic vigour they had set about removing the one and achieving the other.

At the time of which I write Germany was the richest, the most powerful, the most warlike State on the Continent. As if to challenge the sea supremacy of the Power that had been dominant on the ocean for so long, she had been for some years engaged on the construction of a fleet that, in the words of her Emperor, Statesmen, and Publicists, was to obtain for Germany that " place in the sun " demanded by her expanding and virile population. When, at the same time, a venomous German press campaign was directed against this country, it would seem as if those responsible for the conduct of German Policy were educating their countrymen for a war of spoliation with England, even as they had instructed them before the struggles with Denmark, Austria, and France.

Coincident with this campaign there commenced on the part of Germany intrigues against the British Empire in every part of the world.

When also was noticed the indifference of the British public to their rival's preparations, their immersion in money-making projects and material comfort, their delight in professional sport, their interest in petty squabbles of political parties, many began to wonder if the process of decomposition,



which had attacked all other nations which had achieved greatness and riches, had not commenced in this Britain of ours.

Also, to complete the parallel between the apparent declension of Britain and the certain decay of other nations that were once great, democracy had initiated a war of extermination against the prosperous middle classes, which were the soundest portion of the body politic. Observers warned their countrymen that, if they did not beware, Germany would be to Britain what Greece was to Persia, Rome to Carthage, or Britain to Holland in the seventeenth century : but so far as the greater portion of the population was concerned their warnings fell on deaf ears. Whilst German professors were instructing their eager listeners that brute force, not morality, was the dominant factor in life, the Liberal party, which had now succeeded to office, was playing into the hands of the enemy by weakening the army by forty thousand men, distributing the Navy on unsound strategical principles, and discouraging those who, like Lord Roberts, declared that it was the duty of every able-bodied male to fit himself during peace to defend his country in times of stress. In this last connexion it would seem as if the men of continental countries welcomed the duty of defending home and loved ones, whilst the vast majority of Englishmen relied on soldiers and volunteers to perform this office for them.

Unhappily the Liberal Government did not con-

fine their maleficent efforts to the reduction of the defensive forces.

Inspired by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (of infamous memory on account of his never-to-be-forgotten "methods of barbarism" slander spoken with reference to the British army fighting in South Africa) and that political Vicar of Bray, Mr. Winston Churchill, it had successfully inaugurated a conspiracy against British interests from China to Peru. With moral phrases on its lips, this Jabez Balfour Government had committed injustices against nearly every British community overseas, till at last it came to stink in the nostrils of those who put the interests of their country before the exigencies of party. If, as was often alleged, the Liberal Government were quickened by an abiding concern for the foreigner, the Liberal party was the best friend to the designs that Germany was notoriously supposed to be planning against this country. At the same time the venomous and unscrupulous Radical press, while continually insisting upon the defiling influence of Imperialism, did not hesitate to corrupt the minds of their many readers by publishing the most revolting details of divorce and murder trials.

The Germans were not slow to recognize the powerful allies they possessed in the Liberal and Radical minded; consequently they did all they knew to throw dust in the weak eyes of Liberal politicians in order to encourage them further along the fatuous paths of reduced armaments.



The press campaign which the German Government had instituted against everything English was promptly shut down ; the visit to Germany of weak-kneed Radical journalists was encouraged, where they were fêted and fooled to the top of their bent ; frantic efforts were made to drive a wedge into the *entente* with France. Thus, as had long been foreseen, the Liberal party was piloting the ship of State on to the rocks of destruction, while those who read the signs of the times aright wondered if the Germans planned to recoup themselves for the loans they had raised, with which to build their navy, by a war indemnity wrested from a helpless England ; thus was the money borrowed to prepare themselves for the war with France obtained from the French by the treaty of Versailles.

I must be pardoned for mentioning in the midst of these events of world moment a purely personal matter, but it was about this time that I fell in love.

I should not have written of this at all, much less at any length, but for the startling sequel to this attachment which I have encountered in the new life. More of this later : I must first have done with the old.

Her name was Phyllis—Phyllis Dale ; it was owing to a bicycle accident which befell me in the King's Road, Chelsea, that I met her. I was riding to my lodgings in Earl's Court from a three days bicycle tour in Essex when I was toppled over by a cab that came from one of the narrow turnings with

which those parts used to abound. A sudden sense of acute danger, a light in my eyes, and I lost consciousness, till I awoke in a room where a lamp made big shadows on ceiling and walls.

"He'll do," said a voice that seemed dimly familiar.

I looked about the room, wondering what had happened, when my eyes were arrested by a girl's gracious presence. Then the man who had spoken came to my side, and, to my disappointment, shut out for a time further sight of the girl who had attracted me.

"You've had a narrow shave," he remarked.

"Have I?" I asked, wondering who the girl in the room could be and how I got there.

"A very narrow shave. If I hadn't happened to be passing and pulled you from under the horse's hoofs——"

"Don't make him talk, father," interrupted a soft, low voice. "You can tell him all about it another time."

"Quite right. You must stay here the night. Is there anyone you'd like me to wire to?"

"No one, thank you. But——"

"But what?"

"I seem to know your voice. Where have we met before?"

It was a great surprise when I presently found that the man who had saved my life and doctored my bruised limbs was none other than he who had

tackled Mr. William Morris (who was now dead) in the days of my early enthusiasm for Socialism. He had aged much since I had last set eyes on him, in the dissenting chapel, all those years ago. Notwithstanding the disparity in our years, we became fast friends, although I must admit my ardour for his companionship was not a little stimulated by love for his daughter, who happened to be with him when I narrowly escaped being killed. It was not long before I learned something of the domestic side of his life ; although it was scarcely a success, this fact did not disturb him in the least. During the years he was in practice he had lived with his wife, but having made enough to retire on, he preferred to lodge in the King's Road, Chelsea, and to surrender his house in Redcliffe Gardens, together with most of his income, to his wife and family. It was not long before I made Mrs. Dale's acquaintance, when I quite understood how her husband's orderly mind was disturbed by his wife's vagaries. Mrs. Dale was what her admiring friends called a genius. She was composing an oratorio on King David, of which she had already written sixteen bars of the opening chorus ; this was set down in the treble clef. She was engaged on a novel, for which she had already selected the title, and written most of what was to be the last chapter of the work : she had also written to a theatrical manager to know if he would produce a play she had some idea of completing when she could find time. As if this were not

enough to occupy her days, she had bought canvas, tubes of paint, palette and brushes, with which she was going to paint a picture, some week-end, which would astonish next year's Academy.

She was a happy, ignorant woman, who had such a fine faith in her talents that she considered the supervising of her household to be beneath her notice. This looked after itself ; the children ran wild ; she employed a succession of either the most rascally or the most incompetent servants to be found in London. She kept open house to any and every one ; her meals were movable feasts, and were generally two hours late. Although her boys and girls (always excepting Phyllis) were as ignorant as their mother, she had designed careers for them the while she was indifferent to all such contributive details to success as preparation for stiff competitive examinations. Wilfred, the eldest, who never got up till three in the afternoon, was going in for the Indian Civil ; Douglas, the next boy, who was as idle as his brother, would pass into Sandhurst, and so on and so on.

Mother and children were warmly attached to each other ; excepting Phyllis, they looked on their father as a necessary nuisance. He, for his part, had long given up the effort to supervise their lives as useless.

I have mentioned much of what I remember of Mrs. Dale, as, in those days, she would have been considered a character ; such personal idiosyncrasies

are now quite unknown in these days, when the tyranny of Socialism has ground all humanity to the same humdrum level.

Dale spent much of his time in studying the chemistry of photography ; perhaps this was why he occupied rooms in a house which was rented by an elderly man named Goffey, who, being by training a dispenser, assisted him in his work. There was a shabby little dispensary on the ground-floor, which was let to a Dr. Dowse, who attended here on two evenings a week. Dowse was a bull-necked, greasy-looking man, who drove to his dispensary from goodness knows where, in a cart of old-fashioned build drawn by a very old pony, which, somehow, resembled its master.

Goffey used to make up the prescriptions for Dr. Dowse, for whom he had the greatest veneration. When it was time for Dowse to be off Goffey would help him on with his overcoat, reverently brush his old silk hat, often the wrong way, and attend the doctor with every show of deference till the pony was started, when he would follow Dowse with humbly admiring eyes till he was lost in the traffic.

Goffey, the dispenser, had an elder brother, who was rarely seen ; this person never took the least notice of any salutation that his brother, Dale, or I might give him. He was a man of some scientific attainments, Dale told me, and was supposed to occupy his time in chemical researches. No one knew what these were ; indeed, he did not encourage

sympathy or curiosity. He worked all day in a stoutly built outhouse put up at the further end of the strip of back garden ; he carefully locked it after him when he went inside, and took the same precaution when his work was done for the day, which was often not until a late hour was reached. There was a half-underground basement room under the dispensary, which was also sacred to the elder Goffey's use, where I was told he would often work till the small hours before shambling up to bed in a little room at the top of the house.

Dale and I made several efforts to discover what might be the nature of the old man's researches, but in vain. In time we put him down to be a harmless old idiot, although upon the rare occasions on which the dispenser would speak of his brother his words led us to believe that the latter was at work on an invention of great moment to the world.

I was a frequent visitor at Dr. Dale's rooms, chiefly, I confess, from a desire to enjoy the rich dark beauty of his daughter Phyllis, who spent much of her time there, although seeing her meant further surrender to the enchantment of her alluring personality.

I will not weary the reader with the details of my wooing, which covered all the sudden and un-called-for alterations from high hope to poignant despair which have been a feature of such matters since the world began. Enough to say that in due course (eternities, it then seemed) the desire of my



heart was gratified ; we were engaged to be married, with the full consent of her parents.

This event brings me to the summer of 1908, when it wanted eight long months before I could make Phyllis my wife.

It was about this time that a General Election was imminent. The country, weary and resentful of the Liberal Government's flabbiness and incompetence, was also moved to a sense of the danger to which it was exposed by the many cheeseparing economies effected in both the services. The Government's repeated trucklings to Socialism had aroused much hostility ; all over the land numerous powerful associations had been formed in order to combat this insidious danger.

At the same time the Government was not going to relinquish the sweets of office without a struggle. With the money it had saved in the past, and proposed to economize in the future from reductions in the nation's defences, it had promised to the electorate old-age pensions, should this again return the Liberal party in a majority.

The Unionists had awakened from the apathy in which their defeat at the polls had plunged them. Aware of the neglect with which both army and navy had been treated, they had resolved to repair immediately these breaches in our defensive armour before initiating a comprehensive scheme of Tariff Reform.

In every town and village in the kingdom mis-

sioners of Protection had been hard at work educating voters to the advantages to be obtained from taxing the foreigner for the inestimable privileges he enjoyed of entering our markets free of charge, whilst preserving his own intact for the benefit of those of his own blood.

Working men of various industries had eagerly welcomed the suggestions by which, as it were, a ring fence was to be put about all articles of consumption and use within the British Empire, so that the moneys paid for the development or completion of these should find their way into British pockets.

Tariff Reformers promised to devote the large sums which the foreigner would pay for the right of entry to our invaluable markets to old-age pensions, which they held to be necessary as well as just. Electors had, therefore, the choice of two courses, either of which led to a provision for old age. But that promised by the Liberals was to be bestowed only on condition that further attacks on property were to be sanctioned, which would have the inevitable effect of driving capital to foreign countries. On the other hand the means urged by the Conservatives had the advantage of welding the unwieldy British Empire into such a gigantic, prosperous and formidable whole that it would be impregnable to attack. Briefly, the choice for the electors lay between Imperialism and Ignominy.

Those who had studied the latent spirit of the



more intelligent among the workers had small doubt as to which they would select. Meantime the international situation had given no cause for uneasiness, unless perfervid expressions of friendship and admiration for Britain on the part of the German press and politicians could be construed into a menace.

Although there were those who declared that the sorry condition into which many of our best war-ships had been allowed to fall, in order to diminish the bill for repairs, did much to neutralize the advantage in numbers which England possessed over the well-found war vessels of the German high-sea fleet, they were put down as croakers, to whom no attention need be paid.

True a dockyard was sadly needed on the East Coast for the repair of big ships which might be injured in action in the North Sea (the nearest docks of sufficient size were at Portsmouth), but before long, patriots told themselves, the Unionists would be in power, and this disadvantage would be remedied.

Had not Lord Milner, Lord Cromer, and Lord Curzon all issued from their long retirement to offer their invaluable services to their country? There was no cause for alarm; all that was amiss would speedily be put right under the Government that the united sense of the electors would shortly call into being. As if conscious of the good time coming, men and women abandoned themselves to the joy of living.

The London season, contrary to the experience of recent years, had displayed an amazing vitality. The receipts of hotels, theatres, shops, places of public resort told a tale of unwonted prosperity.

It had been a rare summer. As if to belie the conditions of penurious misery in which it was common for Socialist orators to assert that the wage-earners were plunged, hundreds of thousands of excursionists from the great manufacturing towns had disported themselves on the sands of popular watering-places. If the country, as a whole, were not enjoying its wonted good business, there was a promise of infinite prosperity in the air, causing all classes of the population to surrender, without stint, to the joy of the passing hour, with an all but pagan abandon, in complete and happy ignorance of the terrible fate which was so soon to override them.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STAB IN THE DARK

TOWARDS the end of July, Dale, Phyllis, and myself motored for a few days in the by-ways of Essex in order to discover some out-of-the-way house or farm where Phyllis and I could live when we were married.

We noticed that in pretty well every town and village of importance we passed through a Socialist was holding forth to those about him on various aspects of his belief.

For many days a great stillness had fallen on the earth ; there was scarcely a breath of air ; the sun shone triumphantly in a cloudless sky, to disappear at nightfall seemingly into a sea of blood : this fierce pageantry would decorate the western sky till long after the sun had gone.

I remember how Dale seemed acutely sensitive to this latent mood of nature ; he often referred to it, when he would remark :

“ It’s like the calm before a great storm : one might almost fear that something terrible of world moment was about to happen.”

He was very insistent on this suggestion.

Phyllis and I, immersed as we were in our consummate happiness, made light of his depression.

"I know what the dreadful thing is that is going to happen," remarked Phyllis one Sunday evening, when her father was indulging in dismal forebodings.

"What?" he asked eagerly.

"We've all of us forgotten: it's Bank Holiday to-morrow, and the roads will be crowded with holiday traffic," she replied.

Phyllis's reminder what the morrow would bring forth decided us to leave for London quite early in the morning, in order to get back before the roads were inconveniently monopolized by trippers.

We stayed that night at the forgotten village of Thaxted in the north of Essex, where we were made very comfortable at a hotel, I think called the Swan, which was directly opposite the truly stupendous church which crowns the hill.

I remember that a buttress of the church stared into my bedroom window when I went to bed so early as ten in order to be up betimes on the morrow. When I got into bed the sounds I heard are vividly impressed on my memory, as are all the most trifling incidents in the eventful days which followed.

Downstairs some one was playing a popular waltz on the coffee-room piano: outside the laughter of girls, who passed in twos and threes, mingled with the clownish wit of the hobbledehoyes gathered at

street corners ; now and again a purposeful footstep would be heard on the pavement. As the quarters succeeded each other on the church clock, the laughter and clowning remarks died down ; the foot-falls became increasingly infrequent until, at last, silence became obtrusive.

This sequence of sounds could have been heard on any fine evening for hundreds of years past : the peace in which the town was soon plunged was so profound that it seemed inconceivable that there could ever be any violent interference with its tranquillity. It told of ordered, peaceful lives ; was eloquent of the serenity in which men worked and loved and slept.

Although I was very tired, I could not sleep ; an all-pervading obsession of uneasiness kept me awake. I tried to concentrate my mind on the supreme happiness which Phyllis had brought into my life ; this failing to bring me needed rest, I imagined that I saw a flock of sheep jumping a low hedge ; this proving ineffectual, I tried all the things I had read of to induce sleep, but without result.

I got up and went to the window. The night was dark and still : barely a star was visible ; a slight breeze had set in from the East. I lit a match to look at my watch, to find it was twenty minutes past twelve.

Then the window began to tremble ominously ; the next moment I heard a dull, heavy, continuous booming which seemed to come from the far-away

east. I listened intently, wondering when it would stop. For some minutes the booming continued, when it suddenly increased ; coincident with this greater volume of sound was a more violent disturbance of the window-frame. These sounds of distant cannonading (they could have been nothing else) were regularly punctuated by a deep-voiced boom which was awesome in the extreme. Now and again the entire volume of sound would be interrupted by a dull roar, which, for a few moments, seemed to frighten the other sounds into silence.

The uproar continued for the best part of an hour, to cease as suddenly as it began. I could come to no other conclusion but that manœuvring of some description was responsible for the sounds I had heard. But I knew that there were no naval manœuvres at this time of year, also that no military sham night attack could have made such a deep-voiced disturbance.

I was still wondering what it could mean when I heard a knock at the door. I went to it to find Dale outside, who was partially dressed.

“ Did you hear it ? ” he asked.

“ I couldn’t sleep,” I replied. “ And then it began ! ”

“ What could it have been ? ”

“ Manœuvring ? ” I queried.

“ Nonsense. They were the very largest guns. And those explosions ! No Liberal Government would sanction such a waste of valuable cartridges.”

“Then what could it have been?”

“Give it up; unless——”

“Unless what?”

“Never mind. Whatever it was will be in the papers to-morrow.”

When I got down in the morning the only subject discussed by those staying in the hotel was the distant and continuous firing in the night, which every one seemed to have heard. Various speculations were made, each more fanciful than the last. One unexpected result of the noise is worth recording.

A neighbour of the landlord's dropped in to say that he owned a dozen pullets which were bad layers, but that he had found in the morning twelve eggs beneath their perch; these they must have been frightened into laying in the night.

While breakfast was being got ready Dale and I strolled down to the post office to wire to Goffey to say that we would be home to luncheon.

When we got there it had not long been open; the postmaster and his wife were somewhat perturbed. Upon my handing in the telegram, the man remarked:

“A good thing this is for London!”

“Why?”

“A gentleman came in at eight to send a wire to Harwich. I can't get through.”

“Why?” I asked.

“I wish I knew.”



"Did you hear those guns in the night?" asked Dale.

"I should rather think I did. Wonnerful loud they were."

As we walked back to the Swan there were little groups of men in the street who, from chance remarks we overheard, all seemed to be talking of the sounds the night had brought.

"Anyway, we shall find out what it was when we see the papers," remarked Dale.

We started as soon after breakfast as we could get away. It did not take long to reach Dunmow, where morning papers were to be had. The news they contained was not a little disquieting. Owing to vague rumours, which had reached Continental bourses, there had been a sharp fall in national securities on Saturday afternoon. This depreciation was partly accounted for by rumours of impending disturbances in Egypt, said to be fomented by emissaries of the Sultan of Turkey; also by uneasiness at Cape Town, owing to the concentration of several thousand German troops of all arms on the border of the Colony.

The papers also announced (this was much more ominous) a sudden interruption of communications, not only with the East Coast, but with the Continent.

"It really looks as if something serious were up," remarked Dale. "And when one bears in mind the heavy firing of last night, it's enough to make one anxious,"



We had now left Dunmow two miles behind ; we were speeding in the direction of Ongar. Our way was bordered by continuous cornfields all wavy and yellow. The innumerable cornstalks seemed units in a vast, menacing army which had marched to the roadsides before being halted indefinitely. Although the morning was growing up, there were no signs of the traffic usually to be seen on bank holidays at this time of day. But for infrequent farm-houses or cottages, the only signs of life were an occasional proud hen mother self-consciously calling her young, or stray geese who craned their necks resentfully at the passing motor for having disturbed their content. Then a strange thing happened. A big, powerful motor, frantically driven, overtook ours. From the brief glimpse we caught of its occupant, it seemed that he was a soldier in uniform ; also that his head was bound as if he had received some hurt. My eyes caught Dale's as the big motor disappeared in the distance.

"Whatever is up, we shall find out when we get back, if not before," he said.

As we sped towards London, Phyllis noticed the look of concern on our faces ; as if seeking protection from apprehensions that were contagious, she pressed closer to my side.

There was nothing untoward in the uninteresting village of Ongar, but it was quite another matter at Brentwood, where at adjacent Warley soldiers were quartered,

A great crowd was assembled in the High Street ; cavalry were galloping hither and thither singly and in twos. Bugles were frequently blown ; a few volunteers were parading.

We stopped to learn the cause for this animation. To our amazed consternation we were told that, as so many circumstantial reports had reached the officer commanding at Warley that Germany had made a sudden attack on England, he was assembling his troops (no easy matter when so many were away on holiday leave) in order to be ready for any orders that might reach him.

The cannonading we had heard in the night gave substance to all we learned at Brentwood. We resolved to reach home with all possible despatch. Possessed by our thoughts, we made what speed we could ; this was an easy matter till Romford was passed, as till then the roads were strangely free from traffic.

As we sped along we wished we could read the many messages, doubtless of terrible import, which must be passing along the telegraph lines bordering the road.

We found the streets of the meaner suburbs which lie between Romford and Stratford thronged with people, who were all more or less afflicted with stupefaction. Near Aldgate we were able to secure a copy of an early edition of an evening paper, which we had to struggle with many competitors to obtain.

This contained grave news. It stated that various reports had been received to the effect that, without warning, the German Fleet had suddenly attacked the British Channel Squadron lying off Clacton ; that, taken at a disadvantage, it had been badly handled. It also stated that telegraph and telephone wires had been cut in every direction, presumably by Germans who had been resident in England. It was also rumoured that large German forces had landed at Clacton-on-Sea and Dymchurch, in Kent.

Later news confirmed the earlier, with the added information that ships of the Home Fleet, in issuing from their respective ports, had severely suffered from mines sown in the fairway. Thus, without hint or warning, in times of peace, Germany had struck a foul blow at a Power with whom she was supposed to be on friendly terms. There was nothing really surprising in this action when it is remembered that such conduct was the theme of many imaginary war stories which were often penned by prominent service men in Germany. Far from such treachery being condemned, it was applauded by the German public, who greedily devoured those efforts. Now fiction was translated into fact. Londoners were stunned by the blow that had so unexpectedly fallen. Many spent the night in the streets hoping to hear that short work had been made of the invaders ; some of these hung about the barracks as if the proximity of soldiers would

give them the stomach that they lacked ; all looked fearfully at loved ones, wondering what the morrow would bring forth.

When day broke men had thrown off the stupefaction that yesterday's news had caused. One and all were fired with a grim determination to fight to the death for all they held dear. But, although none would admit it, their resolution was already troubled at certain undeniable facts : the price of bread had trebled ; there was a tremendous run on the banks ; men, in agony of heart, realized how they were untrained to the use of arms ; also that the most desperate courage could not avail against the well-armed legions of the finest military machine in Europe.

"It was only to be expected," said Dale. "If Germany meant anything, now is the time. In a very few weeks a Unionist Government will be in office, when cracks in our armour would have been mended."

"What about France ? What is she doing ?" I asked.

The morning's papers answered my question.

Six German army corps, mobilized on a war footing, were demonstrating on the French frontier ; two of these were in the neighbourhood of Nancy, which was the most vulnerable spot in the eastern defences of France.

The heart-rending incidents of the next few days I will pass over quickly.

For a time we despaired or hoped as the German armies advanced or fell back. Those who could do so sent their women folk from London, which was the objective of the German enterprise. Phyllis was packed off to an aunt in Cornwall ; she was reluctant to go, but my entreaties joined to her father's ultimately prevailed. It was hard to part, but we both realized that London in the grip of a conquering army was no place for a beautiful girl.

Most of the able-bodied men were enrolled into battalions ; others dug trenches for the defence of London should this dire necessity arise : at all times crowds thronged the stations at which combatants left for the scenes of hostilities. Not a few of those whose eyes fell on the metals after the train (laden with all that was best in England) had steamed away must have reflected how these seemingly endless rails led to great, wind-swept spaces of sea and land where death stalked.

When the trains came back they were filled with cruelly wounded soldiers and fugitives ; these last told terrible stories of the ruthlessness displayed by the German soldiery on all they encountered. If their deeds of unrestrained savagery were designed to strike terror into the hearts of the invaded, they were successful. But, despite the disabilities imposed by unpremeditated attack, there were some grounds for not abandoning all hope.

France had declared war against Germany, and her arms had already been crowned with victory :

our reserve warships were assembling with what speed their unused engines would permit : the legion of Frontiersmen was enjoying itself on the German lines of communication : the complete breakdown of the South-Eastern rolling-stock, some of which the Germans had captured at Ashford, had delayed their advance from this place : the territorial army, despite the indifferent training it had received under Mr. Haldane's ill-digested army scheme, was being rapidly licked into shape.

Then the death-blow fell on England's hopes.

It was whispered in secret, but soon became common news, that, owing to economies practised at Woolwich and elsewhere to find money for the Government's Socialistic measures, there was not enough ammunition for both army and navy.

It was a sullen, dangerous crowd which filled the streets when this intelligence got abroad ; its comparative silence was more eloquent than angry words.

By nightfall of the day on which the news was known a vast concourse of men, as if moved by one impulse, closed about the Houses of Parliament, where the Government held almost continuous session. I had got as far as the Buckingham Palace Road, but could get neither forward nor back, every street being choked with humanity. The murmuring that arose from this vast crowd was like the roar of some angry beast ; it was as if it lusted for blood. About ten a series of sullen roars, separated



from each other by intervals of a few minutes, rose from the throats of the assembled multitude. It was as if the great beast had seized his prey. The sounds were so terrifying that many women and some men fainted. Then word was quickly passed that those in the forefront of the throng were exacting vengeance from their highly placed betrayers who had deceived them with fair words. Every member of the Government the crowd could lay hands on, and many members of the Liberal party, were hanged.

It was a terrible night's work, but who can say that the victims did not deserve their fate ?

This duty accomplished, the crowd melted away, leaving the betrayers of England, with swollen faces and staring eyes, suspended from lamp-posts and trees. The German advance then developed into a military promenade.

Barricades were erected in the streets of London, where the more desperate spirits resolved to make a final stand. Dale and I were on duty on one that closed up the north and east of Sloane Square, where were to be seen all sorts and conditions of Londoners who were moved by the determination to strike a blow, however feeble, for home and loved ones. One man particularly attracted me ; his name was Simmons ; he was tall, grey-bearded, weak-chested ; although it was a hot August, he wore a muffler and overcoat. He was urged to forgo his intention of defending the barricade, but

no words of ours could move him from his purpose. His food was brought him by his children, to whom he was devoted.

When the expected attack was made ours was a poor resistance. Our courage soon ebbed when we saw those whom we had been chatting with but a few minutes before the German attack shedding their life-blood as they were struck by remorseless bullets. Also, untempered by discipline as we were, it was small wonder that, when we were presently attacked from behind by German cavalry, we bolted like frightened sheep.

Then were to be seen strange, horrible sights. Men were run down into passages and doorways by their pursuers ; some were killed on the threshold of their own homes. Now and again I saw six or seven men escaping from one German ; sometimes one man could be seen facing a dozen or more of his pursuers. In running I stumbled on a prostrate body. It was poor Simmons. He would never take another meal from his children's hands ; he had been shot through the neck. He stared up at the cloudless, English sky with glassy eyes.

After many miraculous escapes I ran breathlessly into Goffey's dispensary ; then, as if pursued by fear, downstairs to the basement and into the elder Goffey's basement room, the door of which was, for once, ajar. I had never been in this room before ; it was almost filled from floor to ceiling with bottles containing drugs, together with the appliances made



use of in chemical research. A pungent smell made the atmosphere oppressive. What looked to be a glass of water stood on a bench. I was very thirsty, so drank. As I did so, the elder Goffey came into the room. Consternation and delight were expressed in his face.

“What have you done?” he cried.

“What of it?” I asked.

“But I will save you.”

“Save me!”

“With this.”

Here he held up a phial containing a greenish liquid. I tried to speak, but could not; I seemed to be losing consciousness. Footsteps and the clank of arms descended the stairs, while guttural German cries penetrated to my hearing.

Old Goffey seemed to lay me on the ground. That is all I remember.

## CHAPTER V

102D HENRY HYNDMAN AVENUE

“ If my head would only stop aching ! ”

There were strange voices in the room, the sensation of unfamiliar people being about me, but the pain in my head was such that these strangers, and what they were talking about, did not matter in the least. I had only thought for the terrible ache just above my eyes, which was as if the life in the rest of my body were all crowded there where it sought to escape from its confinement.

“ He wants sleep,” said a rasping, unpleasing voice.

“ Then give him this,” said some one else, who spoke with a distressingly nasal twang.

Some stuff was put down my throat, which had the effect of sending me into a helpless stupor.

Presently this wore off ; finding that the pain in my head had mercifully abated, I opened my eyes to find myself in a smallish room furnished in the most unpretentious manner with the simplest necessities ; these had the unmistakable suggestion of wholesale manufacture.

I was in a small bed at one end of the room, which, strange to say, had no fireplace. Facing me on the opposite wall was a large text printed in common type. It ran—"From each man according to his capacity : to each man according to his needs."

My thoughts were so confused that I could not for the moment recall where I had seen those words before : the word "Socialism" dimly suggested itself to my mind. I tried to get up, but could only do so with the greatest difficulty, the illness from which I had presumably suffered having left me very weak. Half-way across the room I tottered and stumbled against a small bookcase, on which I had to lean for support. While waiting to make a further move my eyes involuntarily fell upon the titles of volumes, which were all of the same height and binding. One and all were concerned with some aspect of Socialism.

"I've been taken ill, perhaps have recovered from a wound, in a Socialist's house," I thought, as some confused recollections of the German invasion of England came into my mind. The next thing was to try and discover my whereabouts. When I got to the window and looked out I saw an unexpected sight. Instead of a view of a portion of a London street with all its variety of commonplace architecture, I saw that I was in a road in which all the houses were built in precisely the same way ; each house was slightly detached from its neighbours ; instead of the customary one front-door, every

house seemed to have two ; these were placed side by side. I was, apparently, on the top floor of a similar house to that facing me ; consequently I was enabled to see over the opposite roof to what lay beyond. I saw what was a seemingly endless vista of similar houses, in the midst of which rose at regular intervals a square, unlovely structure. I craned my neck out of window, but could discern no sign of church tower, factory chimney, or suchlike landmark : as far as I could see, the town was laid out strictly according to design. I wondered where I could be.

Then my curiosity was excited by the men who walked listlessly either up or down the street ; they were all garbed exactly alike ; without exception they wore loose-fitting, ill-cut clothes of the same drab hue. Other men passed, all of whom were attired in the same way. I particularly noticed that all the passers-by, instead of wearing the ordinary white linen collar, had about their necks a collar made of the same dark colour as their shirts. To see every man dressed exactly like his neighbours was more than a little unusual and disconcerting. I was curious to learn if women all wore the same clothes ; so far I had not seen any of the other sex.

Then a female came from one of the doors of the opposite building. She was young and comely, but was over-dressed ; her blouse was open at the neck, displaying much of her figure ; she held her skirt very high, showing elaborate underskirts beneath ; her

face was powdered and rouged. Notwithstanding the irregularity of her attire, her appearance did not attract attention. Then another woman passed up the street ; she was older than the other, but her appearance was no less startling. As before, her get-up seemed taken as a matter of course by the men she encountered.

Next a body of what seemed to be workmen walked up the road, accompanied by a motor lorry carrying tools ; all of these men were dressed in the same way as the others I had seen, but their clothes were soiled by the exigencies of their work. At their head walked a fine, upright man, who looked as if he were some one in authority ; he wore a red rosette pinned on to his coat. As he passed the window at which I stood, he made a signal, at which the men with him broke into song. I could not catch all the words, but it seemed to be written in praise of toil ; perhaps that was why it was sung with no particular enthusiasm. The chorus died down in the distance, at which I fell to wondering where I could be and how I had got there. My head seemed to be going round ; I clung to the window-sill for support. Happily a man entered the room, who, without saying a word, took my arm and gently urged me to the bed.

When I felt better, as I soon did, I looked at the man who had so opportunely come to my assistance. He was not only dressed in the same way as the other men I had seen, but he had much the same

listless manner ; he also wore a red rosette in his button-hole. His face was more repellent than otherwise.

“ I’m a doctor—Doctor Maggs,” he said with a nasal twang. “ How do you feel now ? ”

I told him.

He felt my pulse before saying :

“ You must have a nurse.”

“ But——”

“ I’ll telephone for one at once.”

He left the room for a few minutes ; alone, the mists in my mind began to clear : very soon recollection of Phyllis occurred to me. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, my heart was filled with love of her. Where was she now ? What had become of her ? Had she any lot in this strange new life in which I had awakened ? When the doctor came back I set about asking him questions, but he replied to none of these, telling me that absolute rest was imperative if I wished to recover my health.

While he waited for the nurse to arrive he sat down, when I thought he would never stop yawning. He impressed me as a man who had not the remotest interest in life.

When the nurse arrived her appearance gave me much of a shock. Instead of the quiet, soberly garbed woman I had expected, a bold-eyed, overdressed young person flaunted into the room. She saluted the doctor familiarly. It seemed to me that



it would not be very long before she would be a mother.

The doctor gave her instructions with reference to my condition. She paid little heed to him ; she produced cigarettes, and proceeded to smoke one of these, while she rested one of her daintily stockinged legs on the table.

The doctor rose to go, at which the nurse pressed him to stay. Disregarding her entreaties, he pulled down the blind, which he had previously instructed her to do, and, after yawning once more, he left the room.

Alone with the forward young woman, I wondered what she would do, also if she could throw any light upon my present situation ; but she took no notice of my questions ; she performed the offices of the sick-room, after which she made herself comfortable on two chairs and went to sleep.

Thoughts of Phyllis again filled my mind, till they were interrupted by the arrival of a man who brought me some soup. The man was dressed in the same way as all the other men I had seen ; the soup was tepid and of indifferent quality. As I swallowed it I could not help noticing how the man who had brought it had the same listless manner as the doctor.

After the man had gone I got some sleep ; when I awoke it was so late that the room was almost in darkness. Some one was restlessly pacing the room.

“ Is that you, nurse ? ” I asked.



"Do you want her?" replied a voice which had a pleasantly familiar ring. "If you do, she's lying down in the next room; but you're better without her," he continued.

"But the doctor sent her, and——"

"Was it Maggs?" he interrupted.

"Why?"

"If it was, don't take his stuff, and get as much sleep as you can—that is, if you wish to live."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"If you're really anxious to get well, I'll put you right in a very short time if you'll do what I tell you."

"Are you a doctor too?"

"I was till I was put into the labour gang."

"Why was that?"

"Because I was too competent," came the quick reply.

"Where am I?" was my next question.

"There's a lot you don't understand?" he asked.

"Everything. There's that nurse!"

"That! That's a very small matter compared to the rest."

"What is this mysterious 'rest'?"

"All in good time. Wait till you get stronger. You'll know everything quite soon enough."

With this he went out of the room, leaving me in greater perplexity than before.

I must have dozed, for when I was next conscious there were two other people in the room, which was

lit by a shaded electric light ; as far as I could see they were a middle-aged man and a young girl. When my eyes grew accustomed to the light, to my amazement and delight I saw that Phyllis and her father were sitting in the room talking in confidential whispers. Yes—no—there was no doubting who they were, but both father and daughter were looking younger than when I had last seen them. My heart leapt.

“ At last ! ” I cried excitedly.

The man looked up in alarm.

“ It’s only I, Dale,” I protested.

The next moment the light was switched off and the room was in darkness.

“ Dale ! Dale ! ” I called.

“ What is it ? ” asked the voice of the man I had spoken to earlier in the evening.

“ Let me see and speak to her. Turn up the light.”

“ See and speak to who ? ”

“ Phyllis. She was here just now.”

“ You must be dreaming.”

“ Nothing of the kind. I saw her distinctly : doesn’t she wish to see me ? ”

“ I am the only person here. See for yourself.”

He turned up the light, when I saw that the man who had been speaking was he who so resembled Dr. Dale ; he was the only other occupant of the room.

“ But—but—— ” I faltered,

“ You’ve been very, very ill,” he replied. “ When people are like that they fancy strange things.”

“ Aren’t you Dr. Dale ?” I asked.

“ That’s my name.”

“ I could have sworn I saw Phyllis.”

“ Eh ! You made a mistake. And don’t talk so loud, or there will be trouble.”

Here he looked menacingly at me.

“ Trouble !” I echoed.

He came over to me and sat on the side of my bed. It was then I noticed he was dressed exactly as were all the other men I had seen, with the difference that his clothes were work-stained, as had been the labourers’ I had seen earlier in the day. .

“ And if you would avoid trouble, serious trouble, I should make no mention of what you saw to-night,” he continued.

“ You mean ?”

“ What I say. It will be a bad day’s work for you if you repeat what you believe you saw.”

“ I can’t make it out. I can’t make anything out,” I complained.

“ I tell you you’ve been very ill.”

It was in my mind to tell him of his resemblance to the Dr. Dale I knew so well ; but this likeness could not explain the presence of Phyllis in the room. Thoughts of her and desire to know that she still loved me made me cry out :

“ There was no mistake. I’m certain it was Phyllis.”

"Silence, spy !"

" ' Spy ' !"

"That's what you are. I believe what they told me of you is a lie, and that you were put there to spy on me."

"Rot ! I——"

"But you won't deceive me," he interrupted. "And for your attempt to get me into trouble——"

Here he seized a chair and made as if he would hurl it at my head.

"How could I wish to get you into trouble when I love your daughter ?"

"Love Phyllis ! But you only saw her for a second."

"Then it was her I saw. I knew it."

"Caught me out ! But you won't do it twice," he cried, as he again raised the chair as if he would hurl it at me.

"Saw her for a second ? I've known her for over a year ; we were to be married three weeks after the war broke out. You know all about it as well as I do," I cried.

"What war ?" he asked blankly.

"England and Germany ; don't pretend you don't know about that."

"You knew a Dale and his daughter Phyllis *then* ?" he gasped, as he put down the chair.

"What do you mean by 'then' ?" I asked, before reminding him of many incidents in our lives known to us both.

To my surprise, he stared at me in amazement.

"And Goffey : don't you remember the two Goffeys ?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"But you must," I urged. "They lived in the King's Road, Chelsea."

"Where we are now ?"

"Now. What do you mean ?"

"What I say."

"This isn't Chelsea. I've looked out of the window."

"It's where it once stood."

"I feel as if I were going off my head."

"I'll explain. But you loved—you love Phyllis ?"

"More than ever."

"Then you wouldn't see her harmed ?"

"Good God ! No."

"And if she were in danger you'd do your best to save her ?"

"You try me. Is she ?"

"She is. And you'll do your utmost ?"

"What a question !"

"Then you shall know what has happened," he cried.

He looked about the room, but, not finding what he sought, he fumbled in his pockets, from one of which he produced a newspaper.

"Look at that," he said, as he thrust the front page of this under my nose.

"The *Commonweal* !"

"Never mind the name ; look at the date."

I did as I was bid, to read :

"Thursday, May 25th, 2020."

"What's it mean ?" I asked fearfully.

"That you've come to life again after being as good as dead for over a hundred years."

"Impossible."

"True enough."

"Then—then——"

"What ?"

"All I've seen and heard——"

"Is your first glimpse of State Socialism," declared Dale.

"Is what ?" I asked.

He repeated his statement.

"And this place—where I am now !"

"Is 102D Henry Hyndman Avenue, D District. You were found quite near here, and they were taking you to the nearest State hospital. Luckily for you, they feared you would die on the way, and I volunteered to take you in."

"Impossible ! It's all impossible !" I cried.

"It's all too true," he declared gloomily.

I tried to realize what Dale had told me, but in vain. His figure became fainter and fainter ; a dark cloud seemed to descend on things and slowly blot them out.

"Not a word to a soul that you saw me with Phyllis," was whispered in my ear as I lost consciousness.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NEW LIFE

I HAD a bad night : troubled sleep alternated with fits of wakefulness, during which I tried, with poor success, to realize the miraculous experience which had befallen me. Now and again I would regret that I had not questioned Dale with regard to the upshot of the German invasion of England. At all times the thought of Phyllis was in my mind : the Phyllis I had known ; the Phyllis I had seen but a few hours before. Strange as it may seem, I was more amazed at having met a descendant of the girl I had hoped to make my wife than the fact of regaining consciousness after such a long period of oblivion.

I longed to meet again the Phyllis I had seen but a few hours before ; to discover if she resembled the Phyllis for whom my heart ached, in her mind as well as in her body.

Soon after it was light Dale came into the room on tiptoe, carrying a glass in which was medicine : seeing how I was awake, he put his finger to his lips as if to tell me not to speak. When I had drunk



the stuff and handed back the glass he left me as noiselessly as he came.

The medicine did me good ; it eased my mind and strengthened my body.

An hour or two later the nurse fussed into the room and made a great talk about having done her best to look after me. The sight of her pert prettiness, with which the effect of the morning light upon her artificial complexion not a little interfered, brought home to me that I was not living a dream life, but was in a world of actuality.

After breakfast, which I was able to eat, although the eggs and coffee of which it was composed were ill cooked, the nurse, whose name was Miss Jones, fetched some roses, and stuck a few in her frock, the rest about the room ; she was so concerned for her appearance that I suspected some one of importance was expected. I was right : an hour later a man, who was physically very imposing, made his appearance ; he was dressed as were all the other men I had seen, but he wore a red rosette in his button-hole, also he had an unmistakable air of authority. If I had any doubt that he was a man of much importance, the frantic efforts Miss Jones made to win his attention would have dispelled it.

“ This is Mr. Tew,” Miss Jones said as the stranger entered.

“ Welcome, comrade,” said Tew, as he sat beside the bed, while his slightly turned eyes, set in a brutal face, looked in my direction.

I nodded by way of reply.

"You are fortunate," he continued.

"In coming to life again after——"

"In being able to see for yourself the way in which the world has shaken itself free of the blood-thirsty tyranny which oppressed it," he remarked in the manner of one repeating a formula.

He must have read the surprise I felt at his words in my face, for he said :

"You are too familiarized with the old conditions to appreciate their iniquity : the community will make arrangements that you are instructed in the principles of the new life."

He said more to the same effect, at which I thanked him before saying :

"I'm still ignorant how it is I've come to life again."

"Haven't you heard ?"

"There's been no one to tell me."

"Sure ?" he asked earnestly, at which I recalled Dale's fears and warnings.

"Quite. Who could have told me ?" I replied.

Tew glanced at Miss Jones, who looked self-consciously unconcerned, before saying :

"You were found in a cellar not far from here two days ago. Some excavations were being made when the men came across your body. They were wondering at the state of preservation in which you were when one of them found a letter written in a strange ink pinned to your coat."

“ Was it from a man named Goffey ?”

“ Ah ! Who was this Goffey ?”

“ A chemist.”

“ This is his letter. I will read it,” he said, as he showed me a half-sheet of paper covered with a faded scrawl.

I watched him with wide-eyed astonishment as he read :

“ ‘ This man is not dead : his life is merely suspended. To recall him to life, force open his lips and pour down his throat the contents of the bottle you will find in his breast-pocket. If he does not awaken in twenty-four hours, it has lost its potency. —M. GOFFEY, 20th August, 1910.’ ”

I stared helplessly at the note.

“ That’s how it came about,” remarked Tew.

He put the half-sheet of paper into my hands, at which I looked long and curiously at Goffey’s scrawled words. Chelsea as I then knew it, Dale’s rooms, Phyllis’s dark beauty all rose before me : it seemed impossible that things had turned out as I had been led to believe.

“ When you are well enough you shall meet the father of the people,” said Tew’s voice, which recalled me to the present.

“ Who might be he ?” I asked.

“ He who is usually elected for that distinguished office,” remarked Tew, who conveyed by the tone of his voice that the father of the people was a person

who was held in considerable awe. "He will decide upon what work you shall do for the commonweal," added my companion.

"It will be a great honour to meet him," I murmured.

"You are right. Our confidence in his leadership is such that he has been elected every year for twenty years."

I expressed appropriate astonishment.

"You would stand well with him?" he asked.

"Naturally."

He bent over to whisper in my ear :

"Let me advise you. Have as little as possible to do with that fellow Dale."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Don't you know?"

"Unless it's the man with the pointed beard."

"He has spoken to you?"

"I can't remember."

"H'm ! Did you wake last night?"

"Several times."

"There was no else besides him in the room?"

"Who could there be?"

"A young girl."

Here his eyes seemed to be striving to conceal the interest he felt.

"I saw no one," I declared.

"Sure !"

"Why should I say so if I didn't?"

Tew did not reply, but appeared to be lost

in thought ; after a while he roused himself to say :

“ Let me advise you : when you do meet this Dale, have little to do with him. We believe him to be a dangerous man.”

“ In what way ?”

“ He is suspected of being an enemy of the Commonwealth.”

“ Indeed !”

Again Tew lapsed into silence, during which I felt that he was narrowly watching me. Suddenly he put out his hand.

“ Let us be friends,” he said.

“ By all means.”

“ We might be useful to each other,” he remarked as he rose to his great height.

“ Why not ?”

“ Directly Maggs says you are well enough, you shall be instructed in the chief features of the new life.”

“ I shall be delighted.”

Tew again put out his hand, which I took ; without so much as a glance at Miss Jones, who had been doing her utmost to overhear what we had been saying, he took his bulk from the room.

When he had gone Miss Jones overwhelmed me with attentions ; so contrasted were these with her previous indifference that it would seem that she was much impressed by Tew's friendliness. With regard to this latter manifestation I could not help

thinking how clumsy were the overtures he had made me in order to enlist my help against Dale.

It was with a great impatience that I awaited the latter's home-coming, when I expected to hear further particulars of the danger which menaced his daughter. When he came back, tired with his day's toil, he took no notice of my presence, but grumbled to the nurse at being inflicted with my company. It was only when he put his finger to his lips in the momentary absence of Miss Jones that I gathered that danger was to be apprehended from either her presence or her eavesdropping.

As before, he furtively brought me medicine ; owing to the effect of this, and to the avoidance of Dr. Maggs's stuff, I was soon out of bed and well enough for the State instructor to visit me. Whale was his name ; he was a comfortable, smug-looking ass, dressed as were all the other men I had seen, which uniformity of attire was speedily becoming exasperating ; he wore in his coat the red rosette which signified that he was a Government official. He was scant of breath when he came into the room. With scarcely a glance at the nurse and with a curt nod to me, he sat uncomfortably on the edge of a chair, while the tips of his fingers touched between his knees. I placed him at once : the rude assurance of his manner, together with the mental limitations of which his face was eloquent, took my mind back to the Church of England parson of the old days.

With self-complacent pomposity he parroted set

phrases in which the old individualistic life was comfortably disposed of, the new successfully initiated and continued.

It was evident from what he said that it was the fashion to regard the old life as a dismal, brutal existence in which a few prosperous ghouls fattened on the life-blood of the many ; that the only possible remedy was Socialism, which was the best conceivable economic organization in the best of all possible worlds ; that to oppose, or so much as question, this last belief was to raise the question of one's sanity : only on account of the principles in which I was brought up a certain tolerance was contemptuously accorded me. After three visits from Whale I was enabled to get some idea of the management of affairs. Stated in as few words as possible, the State was the people, the people was the State. There being no possible private ownership of anything, everything belonged to the State, which was thus the property of the whole people.

By the time a male was eighteen his education had been completed in a State seminary, at which he applied for work that most appealed to him. As the desirable jobs were applied for a thousand times over, the chances were much against his getting the work he wanted ; his occupation was decided for him.

“ But who settles what he does ? ” I asked.

“ A department of the Government,” replied Whale. “ You always know a member of the rul—



ahem ! the official class—by the red rosette we wear in our button-holes.”

“Then you have a Government and means of compulsion ?”

“We could not get on without it. But the Government is an annually elective matter in which every adult male has a voice.”

“Not every adult female ?”

“Scarcely. It was tried, but not found—er—er—strictly advisable to continue the privilege.”

Whale went on to say :

“Directly a man works for the State he is supplied with two rooms, such as you see here, which is all the privacy he can secure even if he takes a wife. To discourage emulation all the sets of rooms are all of about the same size, and are furnished in exactly the same way with furniture that belongs to the State.”

I also learned that the big square buildings I had seen distributed at regular intervals among the streets were the places where the members of the community took their food and recreation. These were furnished with every luxury that was largely the spoil of the old conditions when communistic practices were substituted for things as I had known them.

“What about money ?” I was emboldened to ask. “What happens if one man saves his wages and another man spends his ? The thrifty person is by way of becoming a capitalist.”

"Such a thing is impossible," declared Whale triumphantly. "There is no money in our State."

"No money !" I gasped.

"It has all been withdrawn from circulation by the Government. We have no need of such a debasing institution. In return for the tale of toil contributed by each worker, he is housed, clothed, fed, and amused."

"But supposing a man won't work ! We used to have a considerable number of that sort of person."

"We are not altogether unfamiliar with such an unhappily constituted person, but we have an efficacious way of dealing with such. He is put into a labour gang, where no food is supplied until the appointed task is completed."

"That means the work is properly done," I hazarded.

"I will not contradict you," replied Whale.

Next I learned of the relations between the sexes.

I was scarcely surprised to hear, after all I had read in Socialist treatises, that permanent marriage for a lifetime was well-nigh obsolete. Immediately a man was a State worker he could win a mate, when the association could be terminated at the mutual wish of the parties concerned. I also learned that the fact of a woman having lived with two or more men was not put down to her detriment.

"What happens to the children ?" I asked.

"They are removed from the mothers, almost directly after birth, and brought up in State nurseries."

“And the parents never see them again?”

“The chief concern of the State is to destroy anything that approximates to the—er—er—proprietary instinct in human nature,” Whale informed me.

“Isn’t that rather rough on the parents?”

“The convenience of the individual must be sacrificed to the good of the community,” declared Whale in the manner of one retailing a platitude that was sure of acceptance.

Upon his third visit I asked my instructor how this freedom of sexual intercourse had affected morality.

He took me up quickly by declaring:

“We object to that word ‘morality’!”

“I am sorry,” I interrupted.

“Unless in connexion with duty to the State. Our philosophers have conclusively proved that morality, as you understood the application of the word, was to enforce an observance for certain proprietary rights for which there was no adequate legal protection,” declared Whale, not without a suspicion of repeating phrases of which he scarcely understood the meaning. He went on: “But I understand what you are driving at. I may tell you in confidence that, although by the abolition of private property we have got rid of nearly every crime from which individualistic communities suffered, our women sadly lack restraint.”

“Indeed!”

“If you have looked out of window you have doubtless seen few women in the streets.”

“Very few.”

“Those you have seen are those who are—er—married. Those who are not are such a disturbing influence that they are not permitted to mix freely with the men until the day’s tale of work is completed.”

“Is it possible?”

“A fact. Mrs. Whale—we have lived together for fifteen years ; she could not let me go ; a wonderful woman—is much troubled at the laxity of the young women’s behaviour.”

The day following upon Whale’s last visit I had evidence of what he had told me.

Miss Jones, after a few circumlocutions, asked if I would report her to Tew or Dr. Maggs if she left me for one night in order to spend it with a lover.

Seeing how her absence would enable me to have a long talk with Dale, I told her I should not give her away, although I did not consent to her going with alacrity ; to have done this might have excited her suspicions. I told her that I would explain her absence should Dale be curious to learn why she was not with me.

“I suppose old Whale has been preaching the blessings of Socialism,” said Dale when we were able to speak in safety.

“And at length.”

“Do you believe them?”

"I was waiting to see for myself, and to hear what you had to say."

Dale's fine face hardened as he said :

"This Socialistic State is nothing more nor less than a brutal, damnable despotism, in which every one is sacrificed for the benefit of the governing class."

"Is it possible?"

"We have gone back three thousand years. There is a ruling class ; the rest of us are soulless, hopeless slaves."

"Good heavens !" I exclaimed, as I fell to thinking sadly of the fine hopes for the future with which the Socialists I had known in the old days had fortified themselves.

"You don't believe me," remarked Dale, as he noticed my silence. "I'll give you an instance. "You saw how beautiful my daughter is!"

"Phyllis ! What of her ?" I asked eagerly.

Dale made as if he were about to speak ; then, thinking better of it, he kept silent.

"What of Phyllis ?"

"You shall know the horrible truth later. I'd better begin at the beginning. Then you'll see exactly how things are."

"But——"

"There are no 'buts.' Let me tell you in my own way. I'd prefer it, if you don't mind."

"As you please," I remarked, though I would infinitely have preferred to learn at once the nature of any danger that might menace Phyllis ; but it

was obvious that Dale was not to be moved from his purpose.

“First I must turn out the light,” declared Dale, as he plunged the room into darkness. “You never know who is spying in this cursed life. And you must sit near me so what we say cannot be heard by anyone who might be listening outside the door.”

Eager to hear what Dale had to tell, I did as I was bid.

## CHAPTER VII

### DALE'S STORY

"I'D better begin where your life left off," said Dale: "with the German conquest of London! It's lucky you have me to tell you. To fit in with their point of view the Government has suppressed all true accounts of that as well as everything else."

"Are they capable of such things?"

"Wait till you see for yourself. No book, magazine, or newspaper is allowed to be published that does not fall in with its views."

"Why, it's as bad as the ecclesiastical tyranny of the old Papal States," I remarked.

"The ruling class is always telling its slaves how the world was groaning in agony till Socialism came along to bestow freedom and liberty."

"What a damnable lie!" I exclaimed.

"Ssh! Not so loud. I knew it was that without your telling me. There are libraries of books, which are closely guarded, into which I was able to look from time to time before I was disgraced."

"You must tell me about that too."

"All in good time. Where was it I was to begin?"



"With the German occupation of London. When I was saved from death by old Goffey I was being chased by dragoons into a cellar. Did the Germans conquer England?"

"After a terrible struggle which cost thousands of lives. If we had only been even fairly well prepared, they would never have done it."

I could not speak for some moments, being too overwhelmed with Dale's news.

"What happened after?" I presently asked.

"The Germans turned to and managed the country with their customary ability; when our people saw the wonderful results achieved they were never weary of cursing the political mandarins who were so largely responsible for their defeat."

"They hanged the leaders soon after the war broke out."

"Serve them right. The Germans also introduced conscription into England, with the result that the stamina of the race quickly improved, till we made the finest soldiers in Europe."

"When, I suppose, we had to fight the Germans' battles."

"Exactly. It would take too long to tell you now of the history of those times, as there is much more of immediate importance that you should know. I'd better tell you how a military despotism, which ruled Europe and the best part of the world, gave place to the infinitely worse tyranny of Socialism."

I then learned from Dale how the increasing

pressure of democratic ideas urged the ruling powers to bestow political rights (which had previously been taken away) upon a certain section of the people. Then had followed further concessions by the leaders of political parties till practically the whole nation was enfranchised.

Socialism had also infested great numbers of the people, who were desperately anxious to subvert the existing order of things in order to put their economic theories into practice.

About sixty years earlier the corruption that had inevitably affected the rich members of the community, together with the ardour and daring of the great Socialist party, which had declared a general strike until its demands were conceded, wrought the downfall of the hitherto existing form of society. The old gods, the old standards of conduct, the old sheet-anchors were thrown over; the destinies of mankind were thrown into the melting-pot."

"What a sight for the gods!" I remarked.

"And for those who had eyes to see and cunning words with which to set them down," remarked Dale. "There's a chap named Shapcott who has drawn a wonderful picture of that time. For many days, according to him, the community gave itself up to rejoicing at the fact of the shackles that had galled the limbs of humanity for so long, having been at last removed. But thanksgiving quickly degenerated into a colossal saturnalia."

"What happened next?"

“What might be expected. Very soon love for humanity was forgotten ; men only thought of their own ambitions and interests. A general scramble for authority took place, with the result that the most resolute were enabled to impose their will on the rest by the employment of armed force. These determined leaders were enthusiastic Socialists. Socialism then being the most popular appeal they could have made, their power was confirmed by the voice of the people.

“For all this upheaval, the transition from individualism to Socialism, did not take place immediately, as the wealthier classes, who were still a power in the land, made it evident that they would not be despoiled without a struggle. To overreach these resort was made to the overwhelming and unanswerable argument of the ballot-box. Once the socialistically inclined could command a handsome majority in the national Parliaments, the well-to-do were so ruthlessly taxed that those who were able raised what money they could and cleared off to America. Then, when the Government perceived how it was being drained of gold and its best brains, it declared the owning of money to be illegal, inasmuch as its possession was antagonistic to Socialist ideals ; it then confiscated all the money upon which it could lay hands. At the same time, the various colonies and countries that had been conquered and held by the sword were abandoned to their original possessors, with the result that

the former speedily reverted to a condition of anarchy."

Then Dale went on to tell me of the immediate and unforeseen results of the establishment of Socialist rule in England.

He quoted, by way of text, those pregnant words of Huxley's which refer to the unlooked-for results of any given political action which are wholly unforeseen by its promoters.

The reign of the new economic belief was the means of creating yet another of those tyrannies under which it ever seems to be the fate of mankind to groan. The organization of labour was conducted by the Government. There being very many more applicants for the pleasant jobs than it was possible to satisfy, and none whatsoever for disagreeable work, the ruling powers earned considerable unpopularity by their decisions. The only means of expressing disapproval on the part of the disappointed was at the next election, which was an annual event : when this took place it was discovered that the vast army of Government officials, which had been appointed the previous year, in order to continue their pleasant employment, had voted solidly for the old Government, with the result that this was confirmed in office for another period. At succeeding elections the same influences produced like results with such mechanical precision that the Government, to all intents and purposes, became the permanent rulers of the

country. To tighten its hold upon the reins of power, the Government had passed a law by which it could deprive voters of their votes as a punishment for specified offences. Those sentenced to toil in the labour gangs, the members of which received no food till the tale of work was done, were also deprived of votes.

Thus the Government had become a permanent, unassailable institution which exercised without ruth all the privileges of a dominant caste.

One of the worst features of this aggrandisement was the lamentable deterioration which had set in among the all-powerful ruling class, which had been largely recruited from those possessing the loudest voice and the faculty of stringing together high-sounding phrases. Marriage, being unrecognized by the State, the safeguards provided by this institution had long been inoperative. The incentive to self-denial in order to provide for offspring no longer influenced men, owing to the Government depriving parents of their children ; hence men had no longer any urgent inducement to restrain their bodily appetites ; neither was there an efficient body of public opinion to exert a chastening influence on these leanings of the flesh.

Thus, for all its fine phrasings, Socialism in practice became the rule of an all-powerful bureaucracy, the members of which walked in the pleasant ways of life ; who, at all costs, were resolved to perpetuate their good fortune ; who were completely

indifferent to those who toiled with the sweat of their brow. As if to foster the demoralization that had inevitably set in amongst the ruling class, inevitably because the vast majority of these erstwhile demagogues and workers had never been trained to the responsibility of authority, promotions to fill the vacancies that, from time to time, arose in the Government staff were filled from amongst the more unscrupulous of the toilers. These last promoted their interests by pandering to the gross instincts of those members of the ruling class whom they sought to propitiate.

This statement of Dale's led me to interpose with :

"But I understood that the earliest acts of Socialism were directed to eradicating this instinct of self."

"You mean substituting public for private ownership ! But the chief result of repressing this dominant instinct of our nature has been to make it more insistent in other ways."

"But, if there is no money, what inducement can a man offer to secure a comfortable billet ?"

"In our enlightened State he uses any influence he may possess with a charming woman to persuade her to plead for him."

Dale's words recalled to my mind Whale's remarks about the necessity of preventing intercourse between the sexes until the day's work was done. Dale, perhaps guessing the trend of my thoughts, continued :



“ Socialism has unhappily removed women's safeguards and inducements to morality, with the result that as a whole (of course, there are exceptions) the sex run morally amok.”

I suggested that this license might be owing to the fact of women's sex instincts having been repressed for untold generations.

“ It may be that,” replied Dale, “ but it is only fair to say that, in a few respects, they have improved—that is, if all I read of their lives in the old days be true. Not being compelled to adopt a, perhaps, wrongful ideal of cloistral purity, they have developed other virtues which, in the days of their enforced purity, they did not consider it necessary to observe. I sometimes find women to be honest, truthful, unselfish, and capable of friendship for each other, which is all something to the good. But, as I said before, they're not all naturally immoral.”

“ I'm glad to hear it,” I said fervently.

“ You're thinking of Phyllis. This brings me to my story.”

I listened even more intently than before. Dale continued :

“ My father held a position of some importance under the Central London Government ; he superintended all the London hospitals, where, I must tell you, every one now is sent when they are ill. When he died, a martyr to his duties, I was appointed in his place, when, in addition to this



advantage, I won the confidence and, as I then believed, the friendship of him whom they call the father of the people, whom I had cured of a terrible disease. In the course of my work I was much struck by the slackness which the absence of incentive caused amongst my subordinates. The greatest ignorance and indifference prevailed in the treatment of disease ; frightful mistakes were committed daily, which were responsible for the loss of lives that the most ordinary care would have saved."

"Can it be possible?"

"When all receive the same rewards ; where, consequently, there is an absence of wholesome emulation ; where the pace is set by the slowest and dullest, nothing else could be expected."

"Why are such things allowed?"

"Who is to stop their happening ? The Government is a vast corporation which stands or falls together : it is blind to the faults of its members."

"But public opinion !"

"I told you that owing to there being no family life, which is but the State in miniature, there is no such thing. Papers, magazines, and books are strictly censored ; the experience of those who have exposed abuses is not encouraging to others to follow their example."

"Good heavens !" I exclaimed, as my thoughts again flew back to the immense faith in the practical nature of their ideals of Socialists I had known in the old days at Hammersmith. Dale went on :

“Then I pointed out to Gole, the father of the people, how the absence of competition was working terrible havoc with the race as a whole. If you don't believe me, you have only to see the undersized bodies and the degenerate, common faces of the workers. And as for their voices, one and all speak with a hideous nasal twang.”

“Our old friend the Cockney accent,” I commented.

“Anyway, presuming on Gole's friendship for me, I pointed out how the absence of the old home upbringing was working untold harm on the morals of the people. I also hinted that, if a return were not made to some of the better conditions of individualism, civilization was doomed.”

Dale went on to tell me how he was not altogether moved by altruistic motives in urging this latter point. About that time he had wed and won a girl with whom he was deeply in love ; they had been married according to the rites of religion which were permitted to those who cared to make use of them. When husband and wife knew that the latter was to be a mother, both greatly feared the time when the expected little one should be born, for then the child would be taken from its parents to be brought up by alien hands. Dale had urged upon Gole the disadvantages of this regulation with such persistence that he believed that, if no general enactment were made in this matter, some modification of the existing law would be permitted in his

case. With growing indignation I learned how Gole had encouraged Dale's entreaties in order to compass his ruin. Three days after the child was born it was taken from its distraught mother, who was spared the pangs of pining for her absent little one by losing her reason (an all too frequent result of such happenings), which she had never recovered. Dale's despairing rage was such that he had publicly denounced Gole and his associates for their inhuman conduct in depriving the female of the human species of her natural right to bring up her young. In doing this Dale was careless of the fact that his vehemence would be seized upon as the occasion for his ruin by those who dreaded any interference which the popularity of the doctor's views might make upon their privileges.

Very soon he was denounced as an enemy of the State, with the result that he was condemned to debasing toil in a labour gang (which meant the loss of his vote), from which penance he had not since escaped. His chief preoccupation had been to keep an eye on the upbringing of his little daughter, Phyllis, which he was able to compass owing to the gratitude with which former medical treatment of his had inspired in the matron of the seminary where the girl was being brought up. Dale also hoped against hope that his wife, whom he dearly loved, and occasionally saw, would eventually recover her reason.

Hitherto, with the matron's connivance, he had

been able to exercise some supervision over his daughter; but in three weeks' time she would be seventeen, when she would definitely leave the establishment where she had been brought up. Then, in the ordinary course of events, she might be sought either in marriage, or in the socialistic equivalent for this state, even before the short time that would elapse before the Government, failing this immediate marriage, would decide what work she should do.

Here Dale's voice, which had been hitherto calm, became suddenly agitated.

"A permanent marriage I should welcome," he declared. "I should not object to congenial employment, but this—this——"

Here his fine face hardened; a menacing look came into his eyes.

"This what?" I asked.

"I cannot bear to think of it, much less speak; but it's necessary you should know."

"Tell me."

"Phyllis—Tew—Gole. Can't you guess?"

A horrible suspicion came into my mind, which was strengthened by the fearsome look in Dale's face.

"You don't surely mean——"

"I mean that I've every reason to believe that both Gole and Tew are scheming to do Phyllis the worst wrong a man can do a girl."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A SURPRISE AND A VISIT

“THERE’S not a doubt of it,” groaned Dale, in answer to the horrified amazement I expressed. “Mrs. Shepherd, the matron, has repeatedly hinted what their intentions are.”

“She must be mistaken,” I urged. “If this were France and it were the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, it would be probable. It can’t be true, here and now.”

Dale sadly shook his head.

“Unfortunately, I know what their reputations are in this respect. No girl, once she has left her seminary, is safe from one of these two men.”

“But—but why is it allowed?”

“Gole is all-powerful ; no one dares thwart him. I tell you Phyllis has only three weeks of absolute safety on which we can count.”

“But, if Gole is as all-powerful as you say, any day the worst might happen.”

“Even Gole scarcely dares do that. If there’s one thing our more ardent spirits, and even the others, would not stand, it is any tampering with the girlhood of the nation.”

"There is that to their credit," I commented.

"You call it credit?" asked Dale. "But then you don't know. They would only get out of hand because Gole had deprived them of what they wished to possess themselves. So you see how under Socialism balked lust is the only thing that can rouse the manhood of the nation."

I was too overwhelmed by the nature of Dale's information to speak for some moments.

"It's horrible—horrible," I presently said.

"It's hell," he declared grimly. "One thing we have to be thankful for : whatever goes on in other seminaries, where I believe the matrons are often procuresses for those in authority, Mrs. Shepherd is absolutely incorruptible."

"Heaven be praised !" I cried excitedly.

"Ssh ! Quiet," declared Dale, as he nervously glanced at the door.

Then, as the significance of what Dale had told me became more apparent, I fell into a horrified silence, which was presently broken by his remarking :

"Of course, as a scientific man, I know that these things are always more or less inevitable. Tew is a great animal ; Gole has an amazing personality, as I think you will be the first to admit should you ever meet him ; also a marvellous capacity for organization : it is his able fingers which control the wires that make his administrative puppets dance to his liking. And you can't have uncommon force of character without some moral warp."

"How is that?" I asked, hoping that his reply would provide distraction from the concern that Dale's communication had excited.

"A man of marked attainments has more life force than a man of ordinary ability. As his capacity for fine work exceeds that of the lesser gifted man, so also is his appetite greater for things of the flesh. It's when, as in this case, one's own is affected that one resents it."

"Can't anything be done?" I asked.

"Till now I despaired."

"What has happened to make you change?"

"Your miraculous appearance. If you could only meet him!"

"But I am to very shortly."

"And win his confidence!"

"What then?"

"We'll speak of that later. Just now I'm primed with Socialism."

"Hang that!"

"Let me finish," persisted Dale gently. "I'm wound up, and when I'm letting off steam like this (forgive the mixed metaphors) I can, in some measure, forget Phyllis's peril."

"Get along then, and get it over."

Dale continued:

"Socialism in its most altruistic aspects was a quixotic desire to arrest the inevitable inequalities of nature. It has been in practice for, roughly, a little over fifty years; it is time to appraise the



results. The chief of these is that, private ownership being abolished, crimes against property are impossible. But, even here, society has lost as much as it has gained in this respect.

"In the old days the fear of being robbed of, or swindled out of, one's possessions, which, so far as I can see from reading the literature of those times, was an ever-present possibility, kept the individual up to the mark, and caused alertness in faculties that would otherwise have gone to sleep."

"There is no denying that," I assented.

"Yes, even criminals had their uses. We burn our dead instead of putting them in the ground to rot; our rooms are heated by hot-air pipes, and—and—that is really all I can discover to the good.

"On the other hand, love, as you understand the word, is scarcely known; the humanizing influences of children, the pity and sympathy begotten of the former inequalities in life, are as if they had never been; freedom does not exist, and the vast majority of men have neither hope nor interest in life."

"What about hobbies, if you understand what——"

"I understand. Here and there in the Government, or privileged class, you occasionally come across a man who is keen on his work; but, amongst the workers, no man takes any interest in what can never belong to him or from which he gets no possible advantage. No," continued Dale, "Socialism, instead of elevating humanity, has debased it until

men are soulless automatons, who have occasional outbursts of animalism. Whatever a man's tastes or inclinations, if he be a worker, he may as well be a cog in a machine for all the governing class care. So much for the men. As for the women !”

“ I gathered from what Whale said how many of them weren't all that they might be.”

“ Here again there is not the incentive of possible marriage to keep women moral, as in an individualistic society virtue was a highly profitable profession. But, as a scientific man, it is more for the race as a whole that I am concerned. This is remote from any ideals ; it is debased and degenerating and soulless. It has committed the worst of all crimes from Nature's point of view ; it is living in violent opposition to her laws : the punishment cannot long be delayed.”

“ But, till then——”

“ Socialism has introduced quite the most soul-destroying and widespread tyranny that the world has known.”

“ But you didn't let me finish : till Nature shows her hand Phyllis is at the mercy of men like Gole and Tew.”

“ She will be in three weeks' time unless—did you hear anything ?” asked Dale, suddenly breaking off from what he purposed saying.

I thought I had heard something on the further side of the door.

“ It sounded as if——” I began.

“Then you heard too ! We are spied upon.”

Dale’s face betrayed the trepidation he felt.

“What if we are ?” I asked.

“You don’t know what they are capable of till you’ve had experience of them. You and I would disappear, and there would be no one to protect Phyllis.”

“We’d better know the worst,” I suggested, as I made for the door.

Dale got in front of me, and threw it open. A girl cowered in the doorway ; it was Phyllis.

“Phyllis ! What are you doing there ?” asked her father.

The girl, with a glad cry, ran to her father’s arms.

“How long have you been there ?” asked Dale.

“Over an hour. I heard voices. I didn’t know who might be with you.”

“How did you get here ?”

“Mrs. Shepherd brought me. She will be coming for me soon.”

“We thought, I feared—but never mind that now. There is some one here I much want you to know.”

Thus it came about that I was introduced to the great-granddaughter of the woman to whom I was once betrothed in the days of long ago. Dale had seen his daughter since he had discovered that I was acquainted with his ancestors ; as he had told Phyllis of this amazing circumstance, it was no

matter for wonder that she looked at me with curious eyes.

“So you knew my—my great-grandmother, was it?” she asked.

“Intimately. We were soon to have been married.”

“Was she anything like me?” asked the girl.

“You are amazingly alike; and that is the strangest part of it,” I replied, as I looked at her ardently.

Phyllis dropped her eyes as she said:

“Her name was Phyllis too.”

“Yes; her name was Phyllis too.”

An embarrassed silence followed, which was broken by Dale, who made tender inquiries after his daughter's well-being; but Phyllis would not make any sort of reply until her father had repeatedly assured her that he was in perfect health and was not unduly anxious about her.

While they were talking I had ample leisure in which to observe her; to notice how her black hair set off the gleaming whiteness of her flesh; to see how her love for her father shone in her big, mysterious eyes; to delight as the changing thoughts and emotions in her brain were faithfully recorded by subtle changes in her expression. But, to me, her chief attraction was the bewitching grace of her figure, either in movement or repose. I could well believe that lust in authority was stalking her for prey. Now and again she would throw a glance in

my direction, when my heart beat quickly. For all my abiding interest in her and deep concern for her welfare, I had scarcely a word to say when her father, as he often did, referred to me. Dale believed he heard the sound of a motor cab outside ; he crept downstairs to see if it were Mrs. Shepherd, while I stayed with Phyllis. Directly we were alone she came over to me clad in the irresistible grace of her girlish, slim beauty.

"Would you help me ?" she asked.

"What a question !"

"For the sake of the Phyllis you once loved, I am going to ask you a favour."

"Which is yours for the sake of the Phyllis she so resembles."

"Do you mean that ?"

"Absolutely."

"I am in some danger."

"I know. Your father has told me."

"Don't get angry at what I am going to say," continued Phyllis, as her eyes dropped and the blood coloured her cheeks. "My great fear is for father. He may do something foolish for my sake and—and suffer for it."

"Whatever the danger is, he would gladly face it, as would anyone else who cared for you."

"I was going to ask you to do your best to restrain him."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," I answered hotly.

"Not for my sake ?" she asked pleadingly.

"We are both going to do our utmost to save you, and your consideration for your father only makes me more eager to assist."

Phyllis looked up with eyes eloquent with gratitude.

"Thank you," she said, as she put out her hand, which, if it had not been for her extremity, I would have promptly kissed.

Two minutes later she left the room with her father. Henceforth it was written in the book of my insignificant fate that I should know neither happiness nor peace of mind till I had won her heart even as I had gained the other Phyllis's love all those years ago.

Ten days later Whale called in order to conduct me to the father of the people. My old garments were discarded for the conventional clothes of the Socialist State, in which (they fitted ill) I felt very uncomfortable.

"Shall we drive, or would you prefer to walk?" asked Whale, who was puffing out his cheeks with self-conscious pride. "Mr. Gole has kindly placed at my—er—our disposal a Government motor cab, a signal—er—mark of honour. Should you prefer to walk——"

"How far is it?"

"About a mile."

"Then I'd much sooner walk : there is so much I want to see."

"I would much prefer to drive, but of late the

drivers have lost something of their accustomed skill ; there are frequently accidents : you understand my hesitation to risk my—er—your limbs ?”

“ Perfectly.”

It was with an immense curiosity that I set foot in the streets accompanied by my conductor ; we bore to the right in the direction of what was once Sloane Square. My eyes greedily devoured all there was to be seen, which was not over much. Streets exactly like the one along which we were progressing branched off at frequent but regular intervals ; the tiresome monotony of these thoroughfares was alone broken by the appearance of the “ centre ” houses, as they were called, which were set in the midst of squares.

These “ centre ” houses were much larger than they had appeared from the window of Dale’s rooms ; they were set about with small gardens, which would have showed to happier advantage had they been better kept. Along the chief streets electric trams whizzed and roared, but they did not seem to be particularly patronized. The chief things that struck me were the absence of shops, which had a depressing effect, and the appearance of the people we met. This last affected me the more. Instead of the constant entertainment furnished by the many types of face, the variously garbed men and women—the clothes of whom, if not precisely indicative of their social status, were at least eloquent of their personality—I had been accustomed to meet,



I saw men (there were few women about at this time) who all seemed of a piece. This resemblance was not due to the fact of all wearing the same clothes : I saw but one type of personality which had been seemingly turned out of Nature's workshop by the hundred dozen. Undersized, debased, degenerate-looking, they walked not as men, but as slaves, which indeed they were.

In the old days the chance faces one met were alight with love or the purpose of their lives ; failing these they bore witness to preoccupation of divers kinds. It was very different with the physiognomies I encountered now : all were stamped, as if by a machine, with an unalterable expression of hopeless, abject indifference to any and every thing. The procession of dull jaded faces was a sorry advertisement of the benefits obtained from Socialism.

There were exceptions : now and again a man of inches, who looked as if he had an interest in life, would pass ; but these latter invariably wore the red rosette, which indicated that they were in Government employment. I saw that Whale effusively greeted many wearers of the red rosette, but he took little notice of the workers who occasionally nodded to him.

Another exception was the comparatively few women I caught sight of. Painted, overdressed, roving-eyed, they did not by any means lack interest in life ; indeed, it would not have been amiss

if these had displayed fewer symptoms of orchidaceous vitality. Now and again Whale and I would pass a labour gang at work ; this was always superintended by a wearer of the red rosette, who now and again would give the cue for it to break into song eulogizing the joys of working for the commonweal.

All the way I looked for the improvements and inventions, applied to the uses of everyday life, which I expected to see. I should not have been in the least surprised if I had come across flying machines plying for hire, or other innovations which the enterprise of inventors in the old life I had known gave every prospect of supplying. So far as I could discover in this walk through the streets, invention had not got any further than in 1908. Apparently the lack of incentive, on which Dale repeatedly insisted, was responsible for progress, in this respect, marking time.

In the neighbourhood of what was once Victoria there were landmarks I recognized. Where so much of comparatively recent date had disappeared it was strange to see the quaint little cottages which, in a turning off the Buckingham Palace Road, once formed an oasis of old worldliness in a desert of stucco, still in existence. I afterwards learned that they were preserved as a specimen of the cabined spaces in which the workers of the old days were compelled to live. It was a relief to recognize the stable wall of Buckingham Palace. When the

familiar Philistine splendour of the palace itself came into view it was like meeting an old friend.

“Our destination,” said Whale, who was puffing and blowing at my side.

I said nothing, but thought that the head of a Socialistic State, by living in Buckingham Palace, was doing himself remarkably well.

Rather to my surprise, the lower part of the building was filled by offices, which were crowded with officials ; it was only when we got to the first floor that my eyes were feasted with splendour. The choicest of the spoils of the old order were scattered in seemingly inexhaustible profusion ; pictures, statuary, china, rare bric-à-brac of every description were everywhere to be seen.

“You are surprised !” remarked Whale.

“Naturally.”

“This is all yours as much as mine, and as much anyone else’s as ours.”

“Then it doesn’t belong to the father of the people ?” I asked in some surprise.

“Wait !” he puffed.

Presently we came to an ante-room, where people were waiting as if for an interview with some one. Whale gave our names to an attendant before joining those who were seated about the room. We had not long to wait. Some few minutes later our names were called, at which Whale rose with considerable elation.

“I am never kept waiting,” he informed me.  
“It’s lucky for you I brought you here.”

We passed along a passage, and were ushered into a room which opened on to a further apartment. We waited in the first of these, when I saw that Whale's self-importance had much diminished ; he fidgeted with his hat ; he was ill at ease.

I myself was seized by a more than normal conviction of my insignificance ; it was as if I were in the presence of some force which would make ridiculous anything I might do to oppose it. I tried, but in vain, to account for this obsession of helplessness. A few moments later, when I was conducted into the presence of the father of the people, I discovered its cause.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FATHER OF THE PEOPLE

To my consternation, it was Gole's powerful personality which was responsible for Whale's nervousness and my feeling of insignificance, because directly I set eyes on the former I realized my impotence in the face of his manifest strength. I had never known such a masterful man. Of no particular height, with no remarkable distinction of manner, it was the brain force of which his keen grey eyes, his towering forehead, were eloquent, the determination expressed in the tightly compressed lips, which told me that here was a man among men, a man who looked on his fellows as more or less capable instruments to carry out his designs, a man who knew neither pity nor remorse when he had an end to obtain or a purpose to serve. Although a little over sixty, his dark hair was scarcely touched with grey ; he was as active as a stripling of twenty : the red rosette in his coat of the now all too familiar pattern was all he wore upon his person to distinguish him from his fellows. As I came into his presence he put out his hand ; in the brief glance he

bestowed on me I was convinced that he had completely summed me up.

Gole seemed to divine how I was obsessed by a conviction of inferiority to himself ; he turned to Whale and talked to this person so amiably that the latter could scarcely believe the evidence of his ears. This diversion gave me time to look about me. To my astonishment, the room in which I stood was furnished in the same way as Dale's flat, 102D Henry Hyndman Avenue, even down to the little bookcase filled with books on Socialism. There was the same machine-manufactured furniture, the same socialistic text, printed on inferior paper, at one end of the room. The commonplaceness of the apartment was enhanced by the magnificence of the rooms I had come through.

"How long can you give me of your time, comrade ?" asked Gole, as he turned to me.

"I am quite at your service," I replied.

"Coming as you do from an ancient type of civilisation, there is much that you would be able to tell me. Would you " (he slightly emphasized the "you ") "stay to luncheon ?"

I told him that nothing would please me more, at which Whale made a great to-do of going ; he seemed surprised when he was not asked to stay.

During the few minutes that elapsed before the meal was ready Gole exerted himself to win my regard. This condescension on the part of such a personality to a humble-minded individual like my-

self would have immediately effected its purpose had I not already learned from Dale the nature of his designs on Phyllis. The conspicuous ability of the man with whom I had to contend for the girl I loved put such a fear into my heart that for a while I scarcely knew what Gole was talking about. Luncheon was served in an adjoining room ; after the indifferent, ill-cooked food had been placed on a table by an attendant we looked after ourselves. As if in explanation of the comparatively humble fare, Gole said :

“ As you see, our way of living is scarcely up to the standard of fairly well-to-do people in your day, but we have to see that every mouth is filled.”

It seemed to me that this was a feeble explanation of the absence of the plenty promised by advocates of Socialism in the old days. Dale's reason was nearer the mark—that owing to the slackness and incompetence of the workers, the country, as a whole, was yearly becoming poorer.

Until the meal was over Gole spoke of ordinary topics : following upon Dale's warning, I believed that his geniality was assumed to win my confidence, for what purpose I could not divine. I waited with considerable curiosity, wondering what was toward.

“ May I ask your occupation in your other life ?” said Gole after the meal was over.

I told him how I had done journalistic work for a living.



“Then you must have had some insight into varied conditions of life, and can give me an opinion of the vast improvements which have taken place since those days.”

He watched me keenly till I replied :

“I’ve had scarcely time or opportunity to form an opinion of the new conditions.”

“I will see to that. Your comparisons would be invaluable.”

He then fell to talking of many bad features of life in the old days, with which he showed an intimate acquaintance.

“Whatever imperfections our system contains—and no economic system is faultless—we have got rid of capitalism, middlemen, sweating, overcrowding ; the unproductive labour furnished by lawyers, soldiers, bankers, and by those who pandered to the necessities of the idle rich. All labour is now devoted to producing for the community,” declared Gole.

“In fact, you have carried out the promises of Socialism as they used to be preached at street corners and advocated in books.”

“Did you yourself come in contact with any Socialists ?”

I told him of my experiences, at which he asked numerous questions about Bernard Shaw, William Morris, Henry Hyndman, and other prominent missionaries of Socialism.

Gole’s geniality increased ; at the same time he

waxed, I believe, genuinely eloquent on the immense debt the community owed to the pioneers of liberty in past centuries, who opposed privilege and injustice at the risk of life and liberty. He ended by saying that he could not understand why the people of those days had not given to their champions the veneration they had reserved for the saints of the Church.

"But you forget : people venerate what they are taught to revere ; it saves the effort of original thought on their part," I remarked.

"But our people are taught to venerate the martyrs who died in the cause of liberty. Do you suggest they give them homage merely because they're told to ?"

"It is early days for me to give an opinion," I replied.

"But I should have thought, merely from what you've already seen, that there was no doubt in your mind of the immense improvements that have taken place."

"The chief point to be considered is, are the people, as a whole, happier for the change ?"

"But there was surely little general happiness amongst the toilers ?" urged Gole.

I ventured to point out the considerable compensation that the "disinherited" enjoyed in the form of snobbishness, rude health, ignorance of a more fortunate condition of things, religion, sport, and what not.

After expressing surprise at many things I told him to illustrate the good time many of the workers enjoyed, Gole remarked :

“ Of course, on the face of it, the greatest change we have introduced is the elimination of the family.”

“ How has that worked ?”

“ It has to work. Once you admit the family as a factor in the State, Socialism becomes impossible. A family awakens selfish instincts in the father, who is resolved to do his best for his children, which, if permitted, would end communism to-morrow.”

“ Children were a very great factor for happiness in their parents’ lives in the old days.”

“ No doubt, but if their possession by parents is inimical to the State, it has to be vetoed. By the way, did you ever meet a prominent Socialist named Blatchford ?”

I regretted that I had not.

“ He wrote a forecast of life under Socialist conditions, called ‘ The Sorcery Shop.’ ”

“ I know it : I’ve read it several times.”

“ It is the one Socialist book we have had to put upon our equivalent to the ‘ Index Expurgatorius,’ for the reason that it pictures the blessings of family life. It would only have a corrupting influence on our community.”

“ But, if family life would give a greater sum of happiness than the benefits Socialism has conferred, you would be justified in restoring it !” I remarked.

“But would it? From what I understand of the matter, the home was a Moloch which demanded innumerable sacrifices: it was a presence from which poachers were, not only rigidly excluded, but were punished by social ostracism.”

“Why not?”

Gole took no notice of my interruption, but continued:

“It was the wives who were the ruthless guardians of this institution; it was these women, with all the narrowness of outlook engendered by their upbringing, who were pitiless to those of their own sex who had the humanity and the unselfishness to surrender themselves to the man they loved without exacting the price of marriage.”

“Why not? Our society, as it was then constituted, was a struggle in which the fittest to fight life’s battle survived; the weakest went to the wall.”

“Let me finish: to sustain its position the home indirectly subsidized novelists, playwrights, and the press to advocate its interests; failing their unswerving support, the home withdrew its patronage, which meant heavily fining the offenders and banning their future work. I contend that such exercise of such power amounts to an abominable tyranny.”

Gole spoke with vehemence; he waited for confirmation of his words.

“Oh yes, the home certainly had to have its ‘Index Expurgatorius,’” I remarked.

I expected him to laugh at the opening he had permitted ; instead a frown passed over his face as he said :

“ Unorthodoxy is the enemy of what is orthodox ; the State must defend itself against its enemies.”

“ Quite so,” I assented feebly.

It may be as well to say here that that strange, subtle, elusive, indefinable quality, begotten of sympathy and sense of proportion, compounded of laughter and tears, which we called humour, was all but unknown in the new condition of society in which I found myself ; apparently Socialism was an indifferent soil for its cultivation.

“ One surprise is in store for you,” said Gole.

“ And that ?”

“ What you would call the immoral behaviour of our women.”

“ I’m not altogether surprised at what you say. The women I met in the street, according to the ideas of the old days, looked somewhat—well—bizarre.”

“ The matter is a subject of great concern to the Government ; we are doing our utmost to bring about a more satisfactory condition of things. In your day, I understand, matters were very different in this respect.”

“ Very,” I replied dryly.

“ Whatever went on, it was not naked and unashamed as it is here ?” he asked.

“ Good heavens ! No.”

"A woman was expected to be virtuous, as you would call it," Gole persisted.

"Most certainly."

"And do you know why?"

"It was the custom of the country."

"There was more in it than that. If a father had daughters he had to provide for them, or, what was better from his point of view, persuade some man to provide for them for life by marrying them," declared Gole.

"That sounds rather brutal," I remarked.

"Life was brutal till we Socialists altered its conditions. The man, before he paid the price of marriage for the daughter, insisted that she was of an immaculate purity; hence she was carefully nurtured in a carefully built hothouse, from which draughts from the rough-and-tumble world outside were carefully excluded, in an environment most likely to produce the article most in demand."

"You mean the home?"

"I do," replied Gole. "All your morality, like every other morality the world has known, was arrant expediency."

"We had philosophers to tell us that in the old days," I said. "But, if I may say so, you condemn the cause while ignoring the effects. The home training you speak of was, with very few exceptions, a delight for parents and children alike; for the latter it was an experience which provided a tender recollection and softened the

hard knocks one got when one was thrown on the world."

"Your world must have been a pretty rough place," remarked Gole.

"Yet common sorrows begot sympathy, consequently one dropped across kindness in most unexpected places. But let me finish : if you had known, as I have, the nobly beautiful women, without a thought for self, who led consistently self-sacrificing lives to benefit their loved ones, you would do 'all you know' to re-establish the home and its immense influence for good and happiness to-morrow."

"And ring the knell of Socialism?" asked Gole grimly.

"You are better fitted to judge of its success than I."

"I am. I—the Government were wondering if religion would improve the morals of our women."

"Have you no religion?"

"Nothing beyond a weekly day of rest from toil, when an hour or two is devoted to the affirmation of the principles of Socialism in public assembly. But the old faiths, the old ideals, the hope of a hereafter ! Did these affect women for good?"

"It is difficult to say. In the days I knew religion was rapidly losing its hold on people, educated and uneducated alike."

"And then, again, so much feminine morality was the result of fear begotten of the harshness with



which the guilty were punished by their own sex. If we could only discover a means !” sighed Gole.

He paced the room ; suddenly he stopped to say :

“ But in past centuries—the early enthusiastic days of the Church—surely religion then had a chastening influence !”

“ You are more competent to judge than I,” I suggested.

Gole reflected for a few moments before saying :

“ If we could have religion without a church, much might be done, but directly one has priests, they and their particular brand of faith are corrupted by the world with the distressing consequences known to readers of history. I believe that the Jesuits, in their day, did as much harm and wrought as much misery as the capitalists.”

“ In my day they were distrusted by all lovers of freedom,” I declared.

Gole went on :

“ My chief objection to a church is that it would rapidly become dishonest. It would tell mankind, as it did before, that it was suffering from well-nigh incurable wickedness, which, of course, is completely untrue. Its attitude is like that of an unscrupulous physician, who tells his patient that he is much worse than he really is in order to be indispensable to him, and have all the credit of the cure.”

“ You hold a poor opinion of priestcraft,” I remarked.

“ I belong to a generation that is not frightened

of its threats, that sees it as it was. No. I see no hope for it—none whatever.”

“For a revival of religion?” I asked.

“For an edict that the Government is on the eve of issuing, that raises the age at which girls are released from the seminaries and permitted to mate, by one year.”

I could scarcely believe that I had heard aright : if the suggested edict were issued, it would mean that Phyllis would be free from danger for another year. My heart leapt.

“Is—is it likely to be put into force?” I faltered.

Some of the trepidation I felt must have expressed itself in my voice, for he looked at me critically as he asked :

“Why?”

I looked at him as if surprised at his question.

“Why?” he asked again.

“You seemed so anxious to improve matters. I suppose you infected me with your enthusiasm,” I said.

The evasion seemed to satisfy him ; before replying to a telephonic message and dictating a brief reply to a dispatch that had arrived for him, he begged me not to go when I got up for this purpose. When he was free he spoke, to my surprise, of alcoholic excess and possible cures for this indulgence.

I told him what little I knew of the matter, at which he asked me if personal supervision had any effect upon victims to the drink habit.

"It might and might not," I replied. "As likely as not the attendant would take to drink owing to the temptation that might be put in his, or her, way by the drunkard."

"Say that again," demanded Gole quickly.

I did as I was bid, at which he stared straight before him with eyes devoid of expression.

I again made as if to go, but Gole took me to a window of his room, where we could not possibly be overheard by anyone who might happen to be in the outer apartment.

"There is something I would say to you," he said, at which I began to wonder if he were going to warn me against Dale. To my considerable surprise, he said :

"You are living in the flat of a most able man."

"Do you mean Dale?"

"Dr. Dale. Able, but obstinate. Have you said much to each other?"

"We have scarcely spoken."

"So much the better. He and I were once great friends. Should opportunity arise, you might let Dale know that, if he wishes by-gones to be by-gones, he will not find me backward."

"I will not fail to," I murmured, as I tried to divine what this offer of friendship on the part of the all-powerful Gole to the hapless Dale could mean.

During the remaining minutes I was with Gole

(altogether I had spent two hours with him on this occasion) the father of the people waxed so movingly eloquent on the burdens of his responsible office that, when I finally left him, I had much ado to persuade myself that he was the evil-living schemer Dale had declared him to be.

## CHAPTER X

### WHALE'S "CENTRE"

WHALE was waiting for me outside the chief entrance to the palace. I could see by his deferential manner that he was much impressed by the long time I had spent with the father of the people. He had been so eager to hear the upshot of the interview that the good man had gone without his luncheon, but he accounted this deprivation of small account since he was able to dance attendance on one whom the usually aloof Gole had delighted to honour.

I scarcely listened to his repeated assurances of regard ; I was delightedly rejoicing at the fact of there being a prospect of Phyllis being removed from Gole's and Tew's clutches for another year : I longed to break the good news to herself and to her father.

Then some words of Whale's caught my ear :

" Our friend—perhaps I should rather say your friend—Gole is a remarkable man, a truly remarkable man, but, like every one else, he has his troubles."

" Indeed !" I murmured, faintly interested.

"I can tell you in confidence, confident it won't go any further : his wife is a dipsomaniac."

Then I understood the reason of Gole's interest in the subject of drink cure.

"But, if she's like that, can't he be rid of her in a State where the marriage laws are so elastic?" I asked.

"He could," replied Whale, emphasizing the "could"; "but, in certain circumstances, such a proceeding might be in—ah—inadvisable. Ahem!—you understand."

Here Whale sighed heartfully, but for all the hints he conveyed of Gole being wife-ridden, it was as difficult to think such a thing could be possible in his case as it was easy to believe it in Whale's.

The streets were now busy with men whose day's work was accomplished; women were now everywhere to be seen. Many of these, who had been restrained from appearing in public till a certain hour of the afternoon, seemed eager to make up for the time they had been prevented from enjoying male society. Whatever their behaviour, their bright frocks and animated faces were very welcome after the uniform garb and depressed expressions of the men.

"Where do the women get their clothes?" I asked.

"Warehouses," replied Whale. "They have so much dress material allowed them per annum, and, if they don't think it becoming, they exchange with some one else. But here we are."

We had arrived outside one of the big, square buildings which were to be seen at regular intervals in all directions.

“Am I to come in ?” I asked.

“If you will. This is my ‘centre.’ And if you would spend the evening with me——”

“I should be delighted.”

“You will be in a better position to appreciate the immense benefits Socialism has conferred.”

The interior of this “centre” was quite unlike its uninviting exterior : it was sumptuously furnished with rare furniture and fine pictures, whilst every provision was made for the comfort of its frequenters. Its arrangements were not unlike those of a big mixed club ; there were smoking and reading rooms, rooms set apart for eating, rooms for the exclusive use of either men and women, while in others the sexes mingled.

Those I met in Whale’s “centre” were mostly State instructors and overseers : it was evident from their airs of authority that they had not forgotten that they were persons of importance. The women-folk contained a good sprinkling of elderly women who were married to men like Whale, who by devotion or force of will had made their bonds of a permanent nature. A considerable number of those I saw were of that sexless variety which one occasionally met with in the old days where the missionaries of so-called advanced thought forgathered. Long-haired, narrow-chested, anæmic-looking, high-voiced



men talked to masculine, uncomely, short-haired, leather-lunged women ; many of these latter had their upper lips and cheeks covered with hair, which gave them a repulsive appearance. I was introduced to and chatted with various men and women whom I should have thought would have been more or less interested in the fact of my first-hand acquaintance with the life of over a hundred years ago ; but, although Whale told them of my miraculous preservation for such a long period, none of those I spoke to exhibited the least interest in events of the past. They were mostly (especially the men) possessed by an immense listlessness, which was now and again abandoned for short periods of fierce egotism, when they would talk volubly about themselves, to relapse suddenly into their characteristic indifference.

Next Whale took me to the rooms reserved for the exclusive use of men ; here sat several who seemed immersed in a dull stupor ; others were busy with needlework, whilst a few were reading books from the "centre" library, which was the next place I visited. Here were numerous works on various aspects of Socialism, novels of Socialistic life, in which, when later on I dipped into them, I discovered how capitalists were held up to execration ; volumes of verse inspired by communistic ideals. I was anxious to learn which of the vaunted geniuses of the close of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century had survived the

inevitable process of selection which a succeeding generation applies to the works of its forbears. Whale introduced me to the librarian, who told me that only the writings of Marie Corelli and Hall Caine were deemed worthy of popular perusal by the Government. I mentioned such names as Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Fielding, Smollett, and Samuel Butler, but the librarian shook his head and stared at me blankly ; he had never so much as heard of them. I afterwards learned from Dale that the Government rigidly censored all works other than those of the two authors I have mentioned ; it considered that the distorted pictures these writers painted of the propertied classes, and of their persistent wrong-doing, provided a lurid object lesson in the evils of capitalism. Under the ubiquitous Whale's direction, I next inspected the room, or hall, set apart for the weekly meetings held for the public confession of faith in the principles of Socialism. This room, with its bare platform set up at the further end, had an ecclesiastical atmosphere which was begotten by the stained-glass windows with which it was lit. This particular temple, being devoted to the memory of Mr. Bernard Shaw, the stained-glass windows depicted incidents presumably taken from the life of that eminent Socialist. Here was to be seen an idealized Bernard Shaw proclaiming the faith that was in him, in spite of the missiles a hostile crowd threw at his head ; there was Bernard Shaw dining off a carrot,

and the same person writing a Socialistic pamphlet on what appeared to be a glass of gooseberry wine.

The Socialistic canonization of Bernard Shaw made me smile. To avoid hurting Whale's susceptibilities, I made for the door by which we had entered.

It was now tea-time. The chapel being on the ground-floor, it was necessary to ascend to the drawing-rooms if we wished to have tea. We went to the three lifts in turn, to find that none of them were working owing to a breakdown in their mechanism, which the workmen had been for some time attempting to put right, but without success. When we entered the room where Whale expected to find his wife it was filled with men and women of all ages. I found Mrs. Whale to be a matter-of-fact, determined-mannered woman, who, from her appearance, might have passed for an upholder of the noblest (and narrowest) ideals of British matronhood ; it was evident that she held her husband in small esteem, also that he was frightened of his wife.

While tea was being handed round, and as Mrs. Whale, just then, did not seem disposed to talk, I had leisure to look about me. The stimulus of tea seemed to galvanize the company into life ; talking became less infrequent ; a laugh was occasionally heard. I also noticed that a large proportion of the comely women of all ages present showed signs of approaching motherhood. When Mrs. Whale thawed, as she presently did, I discovered that her

previous aloofness was due to the fact that she looked on me with scarcely veiled contempt for my having once been a unit in an individualistic community.

This feeling of inferiority was shared by the friends to whom she introduced me. I very soon perceived that it was a mark of good form in the society in which I found myself to hold Socialism in reverential awe, also to condemn unreservedly anything that remotely conflicted with its existence. A hint at its imperfections would have been received with as much outraged indignation as would have been aroused in the old days by questioning, in ecclesiastical circles, the morality of a bishop.

Those who frequented this particular "centre" were, if judged by their occupations, socially equivalent to the upper middle class of the old days; but most of those present, particularly the elder people, had debased, common faces: all spoke with a hideous nasal twang.

One paradoxical fact confronted me: whereas the workers, when spoken of, were referred to with contempt, it was a subject of pride with those I conversed with that they traced their descent from working-class families of individualistic times. It was an instance of the cant which somehow seems to be engrained in the British. In this connexion a surprise awaited me. I was introduced to a Mr. Podmore, whom I afterwards heard boasting to a

companion that he was descended from a Bailey Podmore, who lived in a south-eastern suburb of London, who earned a precarious livelihood by herding and occasionally doctoring cows.

Poor Podmore ! Could the honorary secretary of the "Dulwich and Conterminous Suburbs Middle-Class Defence League" but have known of the way in which he was traduced by a descendant !

The thing that most impressed me in those I met was the absence of the characteristic indications of home life in their talk and ways : there was no mention of children, brothers, sisters, or relations other than the wives, more or less permanent, of the menfolk.

One, perhaps, unlooked-for result on the part of those who had banished family life in the State was the increased antagonism, and therefore individualism, of the members of the community. The family, however much its individual units may have quarrelled amongst themselves, was united in the face of a common foe ; its abolition led to the results indicated.

Desultory conversation brought us to dinner, which was served on long tables in the rooms devoted to this purpose. The tables were indifferently furnished ; the linen was not clean : people sat about anyhow. The food was not well cooked, but the attendance was admirable, inasmuch as the servants were waiting on those who were fairly influential members of the governing hierarchy. Things were

very different in this respect when the toilers ate, as I afterwards discovered : the better service which the members of Whale's "centre" enjoyed was an object lesson in the value of incentive.

As the food nourished the bodies of the diners a marked alteration took place in their demeanour : jokes were made ; laughter was often heard ; a dull glow shone in the men's eyes. With the progress of the meal philandering between men and women became more unrestrained. Now and again when a woman's glance rested on the man of her choice desire leapt to her eyes.

Then, to my surprise, a strange thing happened. One man, upon being contradicted by another, struck the latter in the face, at which the man who had been assaulted threw a tumbler at his assailant's head.

Blows and missiles were exchanged for a few moments, till the shindy died down as suddenly as it had arisen. No one interfered or seemed in the least surprised : the incident was taken quite as a matter of course.

I turned to Whale in astonishment.

"There's nothing to worry about," he said. "It's only when there's blood about that there's bother."

I wondered what he meant by this remark, little divining the dread significance of his words, but I had scarcely any time to think of what he had said, as my attention was diverted by the open love-



making which was now taking place. In this the elder and plainer women were often more conspicuous than the younger and more comely : with eyes, gestures, and words they sought to seduce men.

Three times there occurred sudden irruptions of discord, which died down as quickly as they had commenced ; as before, no one took any notice.

It would seem that, for all the fine phrasings of Socialism, the beast in man, far from being chained, was never very far from breaking loose. It was arranged that Whale was to take me to the theatre, after which we were to return to his "centre" for supper. In the few minutes before we set out the love-making became even more orchidaceous than before. In view of the terrible tragedy I witnessed when I got back from the theatre the faces of two young women are for ever imprinted upon my mind. One was slight and fair, with two bright spots on her otherwise pale cheeks ; she would have been scarcely noticeable but for her wonderful eyes ; these were large and almond-shaped ; they blazed with rapturous emotion ; it was as if her soul had caught fire from contact with passion, and could be seen burning in her eye sockets. The while she talked to the man at her side in soft, delicious words she was sullenly watched by a big woman of evil aspect. Out in the streets Whale and I were jostled by the thronging toilers and their womenfolk, the former of whom were taking their ease after the fret of the day.



Some were gathered about open spaces where bands of music played ; others—these seemed in the majority—aimlessly meandered along the streets and avenues. Now and again a man would madly force his way through the crowd that impeded his frenzied progress.

We took a tram to the theatre, a handsome enough building, which was sparsely filled ; admission, of course, was free. The play was of an elevating nature, and preached the advantages of Socialism. I was rather bored by it, although the acting, particularly of the women's parts, was admirable. I put down the excellence of those I saw in the Socialistic play largely to the fact that they led unmoral lives. The efforts of the actresses of the old days in attempting to portray lurid passions they had never known were as futile as a man describing a place to which he had never been.

Although Whale told me that I should see an admirable play, we had not been in the theatre ten minutes before he fell asleep. His snores attracted such attention that, when he was presently awakened by an attendant, the laughter his confusion excited made him leave the theatre. We then entered a music-hall, where Whale told me I should find the entertainment to be beneath contempt. The place, in marked contrast to the theatre, was chock-full ; we had the greatest difficulty in getting standing room at the back of the house. The conjurers, strong-men, serio-comics, and what not were all

tenth rate. That the performers were appointed by the favouritism of the Government officials was doubtless the reason of their incompetence; but, whatever I thought of the turns, the feeble jokes and pointless songs, these amused Whale mightily. He remained till the very end, and explained the allusions I had not understood on the way back to his "centre." Arrived there, we found that most of the staid people had disappeared; those remaining surrendered themselves without restraint to the joy of the passing hour; they were dancing and merry-making to their hearts' content. This joyousness was in violent contrast to the listlessness I had noticed before.

Refreshments were set out on side-tables for those who needed them. Whale and I were stuffing ourselves, when my eyes were attracted by the slip of a girl with the hectic cheeks and wonderful eyes, who was standing caressing her lover. The dark, brutal-looking woman who had been glowering at her after dinner happened to pass, at which the fair girl laughed lightly, but whether or not at the expense of the dark woman I am unable to say. In a moment the woman confronted the girl with clenched fists; they stood regarding one another for some moments, neither making a movement but for the agitated heaving of their breasts. All might have been well had not the man who was the cause of the dispute laid his hand upon the girl of his choice. This action so annoyed the dark woman

that she hit the fair girl between the eyes with her fist. The latter staggered, at which her assailant sprang on her, seized her by the hair with one hand, while with the other she deliberately pounded the white flesh till the blood dripped on the floor. I was amazed at no one seeking to interfere ; I also wondered that Whale was greatly agitated the while he made great pretence of eating, and kept on repeating the word " blood " to himself.

" This must be stopped," I gasped.

" Don't move, I pray you ; if you value all our lives, your life, don't move."

" But——"

" Let ill alone : don't make it worse : be warned by me. Blood, blood, blood, blood, blood !"

I looked fearfully about the room ; the eyes of men and women alike held a horrid, wolfish look ; they were all feverishly making believe to do something, the while they watched their neighbours out of the corners of their eyes. Then my attention was compelled by a further phase of the fell struggle between the two women. The lighter combatant had been driven by the superior weight of the other against a table ; instinctively the former sought for a knife, which obtaining, she stabbed her heavy assailant in the neck, making her release her hold. The woman who had commenced the attack also grabbed a knife, at which the two rivals fell to hacking blindly at one another. The slight girl fought like a fury, but was handicapped by the blood that

kept on getting into her eyes. When she presently threw herself on her antagonist, who quickly stepped aside, she blundered with considerable force against the wall : her fate was sealed. Before she recovered from the shock the dark woman had seized the two hands of the other in one of hers, while with the hand that was free she deliberately stabbed an artery in the fair girl's arm. Then while the life-blood, which had recently pulsed with passionate rapture, poured out, the murderess watched her dying victim with pitiless eyes. Even then the dark woman's hate was not appeased. As if to embitter the last moments of the girl with the once glad eyes, she suddenly wiped away the blood that had again gathered on her enemy's eyes, seized the man, who had been the cause of the feud, and glued her lips to his, in full view of her expiring victim.

Still no one interfered.

I did not wait for the end. I fled from that scene of hate and horror, to be far more haunted by the baleful, wolfish eyes of the onlookers, the immense pretence on their part of being immersed in the trivial occupations of the moment, than by the bloodshed I had unwittingly witnessed.

## CHAPTER XI

### LOVE AND A MAID

"It's awful—it's simply awful!" I cried to Dale, whom I found at 102D, Henry Hyndman Avenue when I got back.

"Socialism?"

I told him what I had seen.

"That's nothing."

"What!" I cried aghast.

"A fact. As for the love-making, wait till you see one of the saturnalias. Every now and then, seemingly for no reason at all, people—men and women alike—throw off all restraint, and for two or three days the population is given over to every kind of indulgence."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes; it's putting the hand of progress back with a vengeance. Owing to the absence of all humanizing influences, I should not be the least surprised if the Government, in order to keep the workers quiet, now and again threw them an entertainment after the style of the old Roman circus."

"That reminds me: when that woman was

murdering the other, those in the room seemed scarcely able to contain themselves, and Whale kept on repeating the word 'Blood.' "

" You can think yourself lucky they weren't all infected with blood lust, and danced, and stabbed themselves with knives, and sang some devilish chant they've got hold of in praise of flowing blood."

" You're joking."

" I wish I were. I tell you that this cursed Socialism, by eliminating every civilizing influence from those who had travelled some distance along the path of progress, has turned the workers into soulless slaves, and the overseers, the members of the Government, into thinly veneered devils. It's no use my telling you—you must find out for yourself—the horrible superstitions some of the Government lot cultivate. We are all of us going down to hell as fast as we can ; Socialism is goading us forward."

Dale went on to tell me how, when a man was suspected of treason to the State, which really meant that he was obnoxious to the Government, a day was appointed for his public trial by and before the people. If he were found guilty, he was left to the mercy of the assembly, when he was generally safe, unless, by some mischance, the crowd saw blood, when its worst passions were aroused, which meant that the hapless victim would be promptly torn to pieces. I also learned



that the powers that be—which were Gole and his associates—took every precaution in order that the people should be infected with the blood lust necessary to destroy the man they wished out of the way.

I was so overcome with all I had seen at Whale's "centre" that I paid scant attention to what Dale was telling me. I little recked that, at a not far distant date, both he and I would be compelled to face the ordeal of trial, by and before the people, of which he spoke.

Presently, when I mentioned to Dale the unrestrained love-making I had witnessed, together with the excessive amorousness of the elderly women, who ought to know better, he asked :

"Do you know why the elder women are so forward?"

"Because it's their nature to?"

"Not altogether, although there's plenty of that. Owing to the indifferent care and attention children get in the State nurseries, the decline in the birth-rate caused by the prevailing immorality, the terribly high percentage of suicides, the slackness and incompetence of the workers, there is a scarcity of hands for the ordinary work of the country. To remedy this deficiency, women, unless they are living with men, are compelled to enter the ranks of the toilers."

"So to escape work——!"

"They are eager to prostitute their bodies,



which is but another instance of the iniquity of Socialism."

"Why, it's a thousand times worse than——"

"Never mind that now. Socialism is hell, and words won't get us out of it. How did you get on with Gole at luncheon?"

"How did you know anything about it?"

"There's very little we don't know."

" 'We!' "

"Never mind that now. Tell me what happened."

I told him from beginning to end.

"His sudden profession of friendship for me tends to show that Phyllis may have another year's respite," declared Dale. "Although nothing would restrain Gole when his passions are once aroused."

"What about his wife?" I asked in much alarm.

"Has he any fear of her?"

"Gole fears no living thing," replied Dale.

"Then why doesn't he get rid of her?"

"Her existence prevents him from giving anyone, with whom he might be temporarily fascinated, the right to question his conduct," he answered, to add after a few moments of troubled thought:

"And then there's Tew."

"You fear him, too?"

"Not so much as Gole. Tew has only his brute strength; Gole is all-powerful; his emissaries are everywhere."

“Can’t anything be done?”

“If you had the chance, would you marry Phyllis now, this very minute?”

“Would I what?” I asked, astonished at his words.

“Marry Phyllis now. Think well before you answer.”

“You try me. Of course I would.”

“Your love for her is such?”

“My love for her is such.”

“Good!” he cried.

“But——”

“Don’t say anything for a few moments. I—I want to think.”

Dale restlessly paced the room fully occupied with his thoughts. Now and again he would pause for a moment to glance uneasily in my direction; suddenly he threw himself into a chair to exclaim:

“I can’t do it.”

“Do what?” I asked anxiously.

“Let you marry Phyllis without letting you know.”

“Know what? Do, for goodness’ sake, tell me exactly where I am.”

“I will,” said Dale grimly, to add, with lowered voice: “Many of us are in a conspiracy to put an end to this damnable tyranny of Socialism. If you married Phyllis you would be irretrievably bound to us.”

“What of that?”

"You speak lightly now ; passion blinds you ; but if Phyllis were your wife it would be your place to publicly claim her should Tew or Gole seek to harm her."

"I should hope so."

"Careless of consequences?"

"Never mind them. What about Phyllis ? It takes two to make a marriage."

"She likes you. The fact of your having loved her ancestress, who so much resembled her, naturally keenly interests her. So if——"

A sound of wheels in the street below interrupted his sentence, as it made him listen intently.

"I believe it's Phyllis," he said in a moment or two. "If it is, she'll be here directly."

My heart beat quickly. I could hardly believe my wholly unlooked-for good fortune.

Dale left the room, to return after what to me seemed eternities of absence with his daughter. Her eyes were big with happiness as she came into the room. When she put out her hand to me she said :

"You're in luck?"

"I am."

"Then you know——"

"Only what your father has led me to hope."

"He knows nothing about it," she laughed. "It's a surprise for him, too."

"What is it, child?" asked Dale. "Don't play to-night. We've more serious matters on hand."

"Mrs. Shepherd is coming up to see you both. That's your good luck," Phyllis gravely informed us.

"Why this honour?" asked her father.

"She's good news for you."

"Good news!"

"Here she is. Let her tell you for herself."

A comfortable, elderly woman entered the room. She was quietly garbed in black; she was the nearest approximation to a motherly-looking soul I had seen since my acquaintance with the new order of things. Perhaps her long association with young girls—she being the only friend they knew—was responsible for her kindly appearance. As I saw her I recognized, with a thrill of delight, that she was quite worthy of the confidence Dale and Phyllis reposed in her. When Mrs. Shepherd had recovered her breath, which the effort of ascending four flights of stairs had made scant, she, after an introduction to me, told us how, early in the evening, the father of the people had sent for her to tell her that for the next few weeks he wished her to divide her time between her duties at the seminary and looking after his wife. Mrs. Shepherd was a kindly, simple soul, who was overcome by the signal mark of honour which the redoubtable Gole had conferred on her. She wondered, at considerable length, if she would prove worthy of his confidence.

While she rambled on I was wondering what this move of Gole's could mean. Dale's eye had caught mine directly Mrs. Shepherd had told us her news ;

doubtless he was possessed by the same thought as myself. Want of breath at last compelled Mrs. Shepherd to stop, at which Dale asked her if he could borrow the motor brougham in which she had arrived, for a quarter of an hour. She acceded with more reluctance than I expected she would display, at which Dale abruptly left the room. Alone with Phyllis and Mrs. Shepherd, I wished the latter further, while I speculated on what mysterious errand Dale had gone. I tried to improve the occasion with the adorable Phyllis, but with poor results, she being all concern for her absent father. I did my best to reassure her fears, saying that the streets were surely safe at night, when wayfarers did not possess any property of which they could be forcibly deprived, but was told by Mrs. Shepherd that I was quite wrong in my surmise. I learned from her that, were it not for the safety procured by a Government motor brougham, Dale would venture into the streets at risk of life or injury.

It appeared that at night the streets were infested by bands of bloodthirsty hooligans, who took a savage delight in cruelly maltreating anyone whom they might chance to meet.

"But haven't you police?" I asked.

"But the wild young men who do these things are members of the Government party."

"What difference does that make?"

"All the difference. The police don't find it

worth their while to interfere," Mrs. Shepherd informed me.

I stared at her in surprise; noticing which she said :

" It's always been so ever since I can remember, so I don't think anything of it."

There was no arguing with such complacency, so I turned to Phyllis, whom I had been stealthily watching, and sought to engage her in conversation. As her father might return any minute, it was necessary to make the utmost of my opportunity. I endeavoured to convey how adorable I thought her, but, unhappily, was not very successful just then. Mrs. Shepherd was uneasily watching me, as if she felt responsible for Phyllis in Dale's absence, while Phyllis was still greatly concerned for her father's safety.

" I had no idea I should be so lucky as to see you to-night," I said.

" You call it lucky ?" she asked, as she glanced anxiously at the door.

" Of course. When I see or think of you I forget—I think you are the Phyllis I loved, the——"

" That's very nice of you, but——"

" There are no ' buts ' ; it's an absolute fact."

" But why doesn't he come ?"

" Eh ! Who ?"

" Father, of course. Why has he gone ?"

" Never mind him."

" But I do. He never goes off like this. I'm quite worried about him."

"So am I. All the same, it's an ill wind that blows no one any good."

"I don't see its advantage."

"It has left me more or less alone with you."

"And Mrs. Shepherd," added Phyllis mischievously, at which the good woman referred to said :

"What about me?"

Phyllis roguishly explained that I was in need of information on certain aspects of the education of the young, which Mrs. Shepherd was proceeding to tell me, when, to Phyllis's unconcealed delight, Dale returned. A few moments later Mrs. Shepherd left, saying that she would return for Phyllis in about an hour; but, what was more to my immediate purpose, Dale accompanied her downstairs. Alone with Phyllis, I told her in as few words as possible what her father had said with reference to marrying her, at which a troubled look came into her face.

"I'm sorry," I faltered at noticing her depression.

"You needn't be," she replied.

"Why? Why?" I asked eagerly.

"You are doing as father wishes."

"Never mind him."

"But I do. My father is very much to me."

"Then the best way to prove your regard is by doing as he wishes."

"But I was thinking of you."

"How? Thinking of me?"

"If his happiness is as much to you as would



appear, I should prove a poor substitute for him."

"Don't talk nonsense. I want you more than I can tell," I hastened to inform her.

"Then all I can say is that you might have said so before."

Thus encouraged, I pleaded with Phyllis that, although I had only seen her twice, I loved her as much as if I had met her a thousand times. I also urged her to throw in her lot with mine, promising, vowing that she would never have reason to regret it. I will not weary the reader with more of this wooing, as, doubtless, he or she have their own ample experiences to draw upon, which are of far more moment to themselves than is anyone else's; enough to say that the upshot of my pleading was that Phyllis, at last, reluctantly consented to do as her father wished.

Delighted as I was with her unlooked-for consent, I could not believe that any merit of mine was responsible for her decision; only that the same forces which operated to bring Phyllis and I together in the old days were at work with a like result in the case of her descendant.

When Dale had left us together as long as he thought necessary for me to win Phyllis's consent, he returned to ask her intention.

Upon learning that she was willing to marry me at once, he again left the room—this time, unhappily, only long enough for me to kiss Phyllis a few times—

to return with three men who, from the work-stained aspect of their clothes, were evidently toilers.

To my astonishment, I learned that one of these was, by consecration, a bishop of the one-time rich and powerful Church of England, which, in spite of the evil days on which it had fallen, still had some sort of an existence, and perpetuated its priestly office as of old, by the laying on of hands.

Dale mistook my look of surprise with which I greeted his announcement that the worker was a dignitary of the Church ; he asked me if I had objection to my marrying his daughter according to its rites. Upon my assuring him that such was my wish, the preparations for the marriage took place. To begin with, precaution had to be taken against the many spies the Government maintained to protect its interests. The electric light was put out ; the only illumination that feebly lit the room came from the moon, which more often than not was obscured by clouds.

It was a strange wedding, yet, for all the plainness of the surroundings, not devoid of a certain dignity, which was chiefly supplied by the presence of Baker, the man who was to marry us. For all the shabbiness of his ill-fitting garments, he was clothed with the inspiration of his high office. I could not help thinking how more akin to the teaching of the Founder of the Church was this spiritually-minded workman, who risked persecution in the perform-

ance of his priestly duties, than were the narrow-minded, broad-bellied, wealthy and influential Church dignitaries who had such a soft time in the days of my other life.

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony.”

The words fell strangely on my ears in that commonly furnished upper room, but, at least, there were love, and youth, and determination to face the dangers that threatened our path—all things not to be lightly valued.

Very soon after Baker had blessed the newly-made man and wife, and Dale and the two witnesses had congratulated us, Mrs. Shepherd’s motor was heard below.

Phyllis slipped away ; a few minutes later Baker and the other two men went out into the night, leaving Dale and myself to the company of our thoughts.

## CHAPTER XII

### EASTWARD

IN my next interview with Gole, which took place two days after my marriage to Phyllis, it was arranged that my contribution to the commonweal should be the writing of personal reminiscences of the early years of my life, in which, at the request of the father of the people, I was to insist on the iniquity of capitalists, the miseries of their victims. I was also urged by Gole to point out at length the immeasurable advantages which the people had secured by embracing Socialism. To assist me in my task I was equipped with a Government motor-car, together with the right of admission wherever I pleased to go, always excepting the prisons where enemies of the State were confined. Many of the places I visited I will refer to in detail when they impinge on incidents in the course of this narrative, but I will here speak of the State nurseries and seminaries for boys and girls, the last of which I looked over in company with the head matron.

It was a sad sight to see in these nurseries how the little ones were dragged up in batches, according

to their age ; the system reminded me of nothing so much as the way in which chicks were reared on poultry-farms. The poor little mites lived cheerless, joyless, godless lives, with no father or mother to cherish them tenderly in the atmosphere of love, which was their due. As I walked through roomful after roomful of preternaturally serious children, I could not help thinking of the vast sum of love and happiness which, under other conditions, these little ones would have brought into their parents' lives, the deprivation of which was an unholy sacrifice on the altars of the stony-hearted god of Socialism.

When I learned from Dale of the frightful mortality prevailing in the State nurseries, owing to the perfunctory care the little ones received, this god of Socialism appeared another Moloch who ravened for the lives of children.

If one judges of institutions by their results, I was not impressed by the conduct of the State seminaries. The one subject that was seriously taught was the allegiance owed to the principles of Socialism by every member of the State. Boys and girls had faces both dull and vicious ; if all I heard were true, there was every reason for this latter manifestation. The technical schools were conducted by fairly competent instructors, but satisfactory results were impossible under a system by which any pupil who showed initiative or strength of mind was black-marked and relegated to work of a debasing, soul-

destroying nature when his time came to seek the apportionment of his task by the State. As Dale repeatedly insisted, and as soon I saw for myself, the one thing that the Socialist Government dreaded was brain power, and the consequent ability to think for oneself ; all its powerful and merciless engines of repression worked at full pressure in order to combat thought that was likely to prove antagonistic to current ideas.

I was now given two rooms to myself, which were furnished precisely as were all the other private apartments in the State ; mine were situated near St. James's Park, in order to be near Gole, who frequently wished to see me, in order to learn how I was getting on with my work.

As I was also deeply committed to Dale's conspiracy to upset existing conditions, I should have had little time to devote to Phyllis, even were I not denied frequent opportunities of meeting her. Mrs. Shepherd's attendance on Mrs. Gole was often so prolonged that she was rarely able to bring Phyllis to her father's rooms ; even when she did, and I was present, I had to use the greatest circumspection in case the matron should divine our relationship. Our enforced separation made me all the more resolved to assist Dale in putting an end to that which made such an unhappy condition of things possible. My contribution to the conspiracy was the composition of a manifesto, which was to set forth in burning words the iniquity

of Socialistic practices, also the salvation that awaited the toilers if they but had the courage to overcome their oppressors. At the same time that I was at work on this and my task for Gole, I was also engaged in writing this narrative ; I had to exercise the greatest care for fear that the spies, with which London abounded, should find out what I was at. The conspiracy had many ramifications ; just now its chief preoccupation was to secure the allegiance of a certain body of men who, despite the discouragement of the Government, persisted in indulging in the sports to which they were devoted. Although these men were nearly all toilers, they were almost invariably descended from what would have been called good families in the old days. Their muscular virility was a source of much apprehension to the Government ; their prowess had already secured for them many advantages which they would not otherwise have obtained : their influence in a State, in which every and any conception of physical force was discouraged by the governing powers, can scarcely be underestimated.

As the days passed I saw more and more of Gole, who was wishful of publishing my eulogistic impressions of practical Socialism in the columns of the State newspapers.

The more I saw of him the more I was impressed by his iron personality. While I was with him, and for some time after I left him, it was as much as I



could do to stop myself from believing his lavish professions of concern for the people's welfare. Gole would occasionally ask me what response Dale had made to his suggestions of friendship, but, at the latter's suggestion, I invariably replied that I could never get a chance of speaking to him on the matter.

Now and again I met Gole's wife, who had the remains of great personal beauty ; she laughed and talked incessantly, saying the same thing over and over again. Mrs. Shepherd did her best to keep her from drink, but hers was a thankless, hopeless task, for which she constantly expressed her repugnance.

Tew's great bulk was often to be seen at Gole's table, when suspicion of myself seemed to lurk in his shifty, jealous eyes. Rejoicing in his might, he had a scarcely veiled contempt for any kind of strength other than muscular.

It may have been only my imagination, but I fancied that there was an undercurrent of antagonism between Gole and Tew ; if this existed, their mutual resolve to possess themselves of Phyllis was the cause. Although it often seemed as if the food I ate at Gole's table would choke me, I knew there was nothing for it but to possess my soul in a firm patience until our plans were perfected.

I must not omit mention of a remarkable woman, of whom I saw a good deal during my public association with Gole. One day, when I was admitted to his presence, I found him with a radiant, fair

creature, who was finely formed and exquisitely gowned. She had a face of remarkable distinction ; eyes, blue, big, and alive with intelligence were set in a face which was crowned with masses of reddish fair hair. Tall, slight, and admirably proportioned, her face wore the expression of an adorably innocent girl. When I was introduced to her I learned that she was called Nesta ; I also noticed that Gole treated her with considerable deference.

In contradiction to the behaviour of Whale and the others I had met, Nesta was full of an alert curiosity to learn a thousand and one things of the old life I had known. Her questions and comments were so pertinent, she had such a lively interest in life, that I could scarcely believe her to be a product of Socialistic civilization ; she might have come straight from presiding at some brilliantly attended French salon in the eighteenth century.

When we sat down to luncheon her eyes fell on the Socialistic text which confronted one wherever one might happen to be.

“ When will you take my advice ? ” she asked, at which Gole frowned slightly. Nesta took no notice of his displeasure, but said :

“ When you do, you should stick up, ‘ There are two tragedies in life—wanting a thing and getting it.’ ”

“ You read Oscar Wilde,” I remarked.

“ Bernard Shaw ; though if that were said by Wilde it would account for its appearing in Shaw.”

"Isn't that sacrilegious?" I asked, as I glanced at the deepening frown on Gole's face.

"I wish I knew the meaning of the word," she laughed. "But no one really deserves the credit for saying that. It's been said in more or less the same words by Pope, Congreve, Vanbrugh, La Rochefoucauld—every one. It's the comment of the various civilizations upon any and all of their desires and their efforts to gratify them."

"You would hint, publicly, that Socialism is a failure?" asked Gole.

"Who of us can say? It has abolished tiresome restraints, but, perhaps, those gave an edge to enjoyment," sighed the angelic-looking girl.

"Come, come, where is your philosophy?" remonstrated Gole.

"Don't speak of philosophy," cried the fair Nesta. "It's only the ointment with which those vanquished by life ease their hurt."

She said more in the same strain, which led me to suspect that her innocent face was scarcely an index of her mind. Later, when Gole again spoke of the possible advantage to the State of introducing some form of Christianity, Nesta broke into amused laughter.

"I see nothing to laugh at," he declared sternly.

"I am perfectly serious," she replied, as she became suddenly grave. "I envy the Romans just when Christianity was making headway. Christianity invented sin, and made enjoyment quite interesting."

Afterwards, when I spoke of Nesta to Dale, he told me how she was the pride, the moving spirit, the shining light, of the more exalted Government set. (The nature of their amusements, which I was permitted to witness, I will describe later.) He also told me how both Gole and Nesta believed that they were respectively the Pericles and Aspasia of the State which Socialism had called into being.

For some time it had been Dale's wish that I should accompany him the next time he visited his wife ; I arranged to go with him on the first occasion he should be free, which was on the forthcoming public holiday. When this arrived, the morning's paper announced the enactment of two new laws. One was to the effect "That for the future girls were not to leave the State seminaries until they were eighteen years of age "; the other, "That, owing to the shortage of labour, all women must work ; exception alone was to be made with those who were expecting to become mothers."

Not to attract attention, Dale and I met in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross. We were both in high feather at the probability of Phyllis escaping for another year from those who sought to harm her. We decided to walk to Fenchurch Street, as I was anxious to note the changes that had taken place since I had last seen the city. As we walked, the first thing that struck me was the behaviour of the holiday crowd. Instead of the boisterous, good-natured jollity of family parties, which was the

commonest feature of old-time bank holidays, most of the people I saw idled aimlessly about the streets as if time hung heavily upon their hands. The exceptions were either men and women who were possessed by sexual attraction, or as when, all too frequently, groups were gathered about a fight in the street. Usually these were between men; occasionally women were the combatants; rarely a woman and a man. Although those engaged struggled more like wild beasts than human beings, no one sought to interfere. These fights were invariably fought to a finish, when the victor would set about maltreating the vanquished with any strength that might be left.

“Why are they fighting like that?” I asked Dale.

“For what they conceive to be love. It’s all that interests them.”

“But don’t they often kill one another?”

“Very often; our constitutions are now so enfeebled that many of the seriously injured very soon go under.”

“What is the Government doing?” I asked.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“From their point of view it is very much better that a man should be killed outright rather than, if severely injured, he should merely exist as a costly burden to the State.”

“Is that why nothing is done?”

“Partly; also, because these fights are popular

with the people, who might jib if they were prevented."

I was now getting quite used to a brutal explanation of anything I did not understand.

As we progressed citywards there was a complete absence of the eloquent evidences of wealth and prosperity which formerly distinguished that part of London. Banks, insurance offices, and places which were once hives of industry, were either closed or turned into flats ; many of the warehouses, which were empty and had their windows broken, seemed to brood mournfully over their former activity ; grass grew here and there in the streets ; the city churchyards were smothered with rank, noisome vegetation ; the statue of Queen Anne set up in St. Paul's Churchyard had lost its head, while the Cathedral itself, neglected and in sad repair, looked down on a city from which the wealth and consequent importance had departed.

"What does it mean ?" I asked, as I looked at the spread of desolation.

"Why, that, owing to the absence of capital and individualism, the captains of industry, organized labour, and the former wealth of the country have disappeared. Thanks to Socialism, we are now a poor nation. Even if it be true that all wealth is the result of labour, labour is now so incompetent, lazy, and ill-organized that its results are appallingly disappointing."

The London asylums for the insane were built



along the stretch of Essex marshland which borders the river after Dagenham is passed. When we got to Fenchurch Street a goodly number of people were catching trains, although not so many as I expected, seeing that people could get into the country for nothing. While we waited on the platform Dale called my attention to a little group of Government officials who were travelling by the same train as ourselves. They walked as far as the engine, where they purposefully displayed their red rosettes.

“See what they’re up to ?” asked Dale.

“I don’t,” I replied.

“They’re showing the engine-driver that they’re Government officials, so that he’ll do his best to avoid a smash.”

“Is it like that ?”

“Unhappily.”

When, ten minutes after the advertised time, the train started, I looked out of window eager to see what effect Socialism had had on the working-class districts of London. I saw that their conversion from their former squalor to the depressing uniformity of the socialistically designed streets had proceeded half-heartedly ; roads of the new style, semi-detached order alternated with the original streets and alleys. Our travelling was slow, the halts frequent and prolonged ; it seemed as if the engine were carefully picking its way and stopping now and then to turn over in its mind the best thing to be done.



At Barking there appeared such small prospect of our getting any further that Dale and I decided to get out and walk the distance that separated us from our destination. I was nothing loth : I desired nearer acquaintance with the effect of Socialism on the great body of the workers. I was far from edified at what I saw. The houses in which the toilers lived seemed little better than the hovels which had excited the anger of social crusaders in the old days ; grass was growing in many of the streets ; offensive smells assailed one's nostrils at every turn. But it was the appearance of the men and women we encountered which chiefly excited my surprise. Most, if not all, had gross, animal faces ; they looked as if they were scarcely removed from beasts of the field, and ill-favoured specimens at that : many of the women, to facilitate the work on which they were usually employed, were dressed in male garb. It being a public holiday, neither men nor women seemed to know what to do with their leisure ; they lay about the road in a brutish ease ; even the inevitable fights which were taking place all about us failed to rouse them from their stupor. As if to emphasize the hideousness of it all, the sun blazed gloriously in a faultless sky. All I saw was like a horrible phantasy of dreamland ; even Dale was moved out of his wonted serenity of mind. With curses against Socialism on his lips, he quickened his steps, a proceeding that I was only too eager to imitate.

As we stretched our legs, loathing for the repulsive-looking toilers gave place to a deep pity. Were they not the helpless victims of tyrants like Gole and his kind, who, octopus-like, sucked the life-blood from those they had deliberately dispossessed of all that made life worth living ?

At Barkingside, now much more built upon than when I had last set eyes on it, a crowd was collected about a house, from which came sounds of tumult ; a motor, which was surrounded by officers of the Government, stood directly outside in the road. We could not avoid the disturbance, so made haste to pass it, in order to leave it behind us as soon as may be. As we elbowed a passage through the unsavoury crowd we could not help seeing what had attracted the gathering. Four Government officials came from the house, one of whom was carrying a tiny infant ; they were closely followed by a man and a woman, the latter of whom had left the bed of illness incidental to the little one's birth in order to fight for possession of her child. The woman screamed and bit and scratched ; the man laid desperately about him, but to little purpose. For a few moments the mother regained her child by clawing from behind the eyes of the man who carried it ; but the others came to his rescue, with the result that very soon the little one was again ravished, this time finally, from its mother's arms. It was taken away in the motor to one of the Government nurseries. The last I saw of the sad

business was the mother lying in the dust and filth of the road, she having fallen in a fit or a faint, while her man was doing his best to succour her. Both were surrounded by the brutal, jeering crowd.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MAD MOTHERS

NEITHER of us spoke for some minutes ; we pressed purposefully forward. Suddenly we emerged from the unclean breath, the confinement of mean streets, with all their suggestions of bestial living, into the good sweet air, the joyous spaciousness of the open country. Sunshine rioted in hedgerow and trees ; on our right crept the river, a great, silver-skinned, endless reptile ; high up a lark sang, welcoming the summer, the morning, and his mate.

We both paused involuntarily to empty our lungs of the stale, unwholesome air we had lately breathed, to take in great draughts of the sweetness that was so bountifully provided.

“ How much further ? ” I asked.

“ Something under two miles.”

“ Good. We want exercise after walking along those horrible streets. And there are many things I want to ask you which I’ve forgotten when I’ve been with you.”

“ Fire away,” said Dale.

“ First, with regard to what we saw just now,

I should have thought that a few scenes like that would make men gladly risk their lives in order to do away with the system which made such a state of things possible."

"You would think so. But all initiative is so persistently discouraged that the last thing anyone would dream of, much less do, is to take the law into his own hands."

"All, without exception, submit to this cruel tyranny?"

"Scarcely all. Now and again a man and a woman will, for the sake of their child and each other, disappear into the wilds and live like beasts of prey in some out-of-the-way spot."

"But for how long?"

"Sometimes they are hunted down; usually it depends on the severity of the next winter. A mild winter they'll live through; when it's bad weather they are soon killed off."

"Good God!"

"You may well say that. Socialism is hell, and when you've said that you can't say any more."

"But I believe Whale told me that once women had votes——"

"They did," interrupted Dale.

"Didn't they use them to prevent themselves being deprived of their children?"

"That was why they lost their votes. The Government was in great danger of being defeated by the women being against them; it passed a

law in the nick of time, which, by taking away their voting power, made its tyranny secure."

As we put an increasing distance between London and ourselves, the outlines of seemingly endless lengths of buildings, which rose some considerable way ahead of us, became more and more distinct. They were set up on both sides of the road.

"Our destination," said Dale, as he noticed the direction of my gaze.

"But there's accommodation there for——"

"Exactly. When you see the hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women — particularly women—that Socialism has made insane, you will, perhaps, believe what I'm always telling you about it."

"But I do believe."

"But as yet, beyond your separation from Phyllis, it hasn't made you suffer. You don't feel as I do, in the very marrow of my bones, what a bestial infamy Socialism is."

"But the mad people—are they toilers or the ruling class?"

"Both. The reason why there are many more women than men is because mothers are deprived of their children."

I told Dale how most of the people at Whale's "Centre" had seemed to be all but out of their minds when they had witnessed the scene of bloodshed at which it was my misfortune to be present. He replied :

"Then it's not very difficult for you to imagine how easy it is to fill the lunatic asylums. And there's another thing—both rulers and toilers alike, almost as one man, get obsessed by strange forebodings. I suppose you know the latest?"

I confessed that I did not, at which Dale told me that the great majority of the people expected the end of the world at sundown in three weeks' time.

"Is it possible?" I asked.

"Quite. If you're alive then you'll see strange things. Every one is talking about it just now."

"It's the first I've heard of it."

"That is because they all feel you're not one of themselves. The only persons you'd be likely to hear about it from are Gole, Nesta, or myself."

"I suppose Gole and Nesta have been too busy with other things to tell me."

"I'm convinced no one else would. Pretty well every one belongs to some secret society, which has horrid rites and mysterious signs of its own. Unless you are a member of one of these you will never make a friend of anyone."

"I've no particular wish to, from what I've seen of them."

"They've only one subject of conversation among themselves, and that's lewdness. I suppose it's a consequence of their eternal love-making."

As we approached the asylums, which now loomed grimly before us, Dale became increasingly prone to silence. He did not speak; he answered in



monosyllables when I addressed him. As his eyes were continually fixed on the forbidding-looking buildings, now directly ahead, I divined the subject of his thoughts, so preserved a respectful silence. I thought of my Phyllis, of how long before it would be before I could claim her as my own, of how dearly I loved her. Then I fell to thinking of the other Phyllis, her ancestress, and of the miraculous happening by which I had loved, and been loved, by two girls of the same family, the life of the one being removed from that of the other by a wide interval of years. Then I looked wonderingly at the sky which, had things happened as normally as with other men, would for many long years have spread above my grave. My thoughts were interrupted by our arrival at the beginning of the buildings which, on one side of the road, stretched into the interminable distance ; upon the other they proceeded for, comparatively, a short way. I quickly noticed that these last were untenanted and dilapidated. Now and again blue sky could be seen through gaping fissures in the thick walls of which they were built ; they were closely invested by a dense, dogged army of rank, vegetable growth.

“ You wonder what these were used for ? ” asked Dale.

“ Naturally.”

“ They were State prisons for the worst offenders, but they were too expensive to keep up.”

“ Then what happened to the prisoners ? ”

“Most of them died from disease. The others—well, I won’t tell you just now what happened to the others. You’ll have your fill of horrors before the day is out.”

Dale expected to find his wife in the fifteenth of the buildings on our right ; each of these was of such great size that it took us, even now, some time to reach the one he sought. Between the fifth and the seventh was a horrid gap ; it looked as if a tooth were missing from a gigantic jaw.

“Fire,” replied Dale, in answer to my look of inquiry. “Only three escaped.”

“Haven’t they fire brigades and all that sort of thing ?” I asked.

“They have,” replied Dale significantly, emphasizing the word “have.” “But, joined to their incompetence, the patients refused to help themselves, so what else was to be expected ?”

As we walked, the forbidding structures with the barred windows on our right seemed to take all the gladness out of the sunlight and the day ; if it had not been for Dale’s anxiety that I should see his wife, I should have turned back.

The asylums appeared to be free to anyone who cared to enter ; it was only the egress of the patients that was carefully provided against. We had barely got inside the building which was our destination, when my senses were disturbed by proximity to the insane. The ground-floor was devoted to the uses of the attendants. Although

every precaution was taken to prevent sounds from above interfering with their leisure, now and again a muffled, soul-searing cry penetrated to my hearing. Then, passing through many carefully guarded doors, an acuter sense of mental and physical discomfort was preliminary to coming upon the patients. We found ourselves in a vast room, barely furnished with forms and tables, which was filled with men and women (women greatly preponderated) suffering from brain sickness. Some ten feet from the floor ran a gallery round the walls, which was for the use of both male and female attendants ; some ten or a dozen of these, who were now on duty, were absorbed in the eternal philandering peculiar to the Socialist state, indifferent to the hideous hubbub made by the lunatics, many of whom spent their day in shaking their fists and shrieking at the occupants of the gallery.

“How shall we find her ?” I asked.

“She always sits in the same place ; it’s at the further end of the room,” replied Dale.

We elbowed our way to where Dale expected to find his wife. Progress was slow, as we were constantly stopped by those who sought either to question or molest us. I had visited lunatic asylums in the old days, so was not, at first, much taken aback at what I saw and heard ; but I had not been more than a few moments in this place before I was horrified at one common characteristic of the female patients, which had nothing whatso-

ever to do with the disgraceful condition of neglect in which they were kept.

Scarcely without exception, the women in the room were all of a type ; but for their varying symptoms of madness, they were (always excepting my Phyllis) quite the most admirable women I had seen in the Socialist state. Soft-featured, gentle-eyed, compassionate-looking, they would have made adorable mothers had they only been permitted to fulfil the destiny which Nature had designed for them. It was unnecessary for Dale to insist on the cause of their insanity ; I instinctively divined that the forcible severance from dearly-loved offspring was responsible for their unhappy condition. As I glanced at the infinite pathos of many a fair face, the infamy of it all was brought home to me far more acutely than by any of the other distressing sights I had hitherto seen. Here was an immeasurable power, not only for good, but, what was much more important, for holy happiness diverted from its natural channels, with the hideously eloquent results which filled, not only this big room, but countless others in the country. The insanity of the best, the noblest women in the State was one of the heavy prices exacted to enable a monstrous tyranny to exist, a further useless sacrifice on the altar of Socialism. We found Mrs. Dale in her accustomed place ; I was surprised to see what a youthful appearance she made. Judged by her figure and her face, she did not look a day more than

twenty ; her black hair was parted in the middle, and smoothed back from her broad, low forehead. She was sitting with her hands folded on her knees, with eyes which gazed straight before her. It was only when Dale touched her on the shoulder that I saw these last. I was appalled at their expression. They were big and blue, but no words of mine could describe the immensity of the deep anguish they expressed. It was as if she had suffered all the unmeasured, immeasurable pain that the sorrowing world had ever known. Dale, with a great tenderness, sat by his wife. He took one of her hands in his as he signed to me to do likewise with the other. He was deeply moved ; I, with my heart welling with love for Phyllis, was far from insensible to her mother's extremity. Again and again I vowed to do my utmost to assist in overthrowing a condition of things that was responsible for such tragic results. Dale continued to gaze with infinite love and compassion at his wife, who, in inconceivable indifference to his presence, sat with eyes which seemed to express the suffering of all the unrecorded agony of mankind. Thus we sat for quite a long time.

For all my concern with Dale's sad preoccupation, I was not insensible to the outbursts of violence in which some of the patients now and again indulged. When these happened the male attendants in the gallery would reluctantly leave their philandering to hurl, with unerring aim, a short iron bar at the

worst offender, who more often than not was cruelly hurt by this missile, a supply of which was kept at hand.

I had been sitting with Mrs. Dale for quite a long time when I noticed considerable animation among the attendants, one or two of whom pointed in our direction. A few moments later some of these came to where we were sitting ; they told us, as well as the tumult would permit, that two emissaries of Gole's had arrived in order to conduct Mrs. Dale to an asylum near St. James's, which was reserved for the use of State officials whose wives had lost their reason. Mrs. Dale was removed from the company of the other lunatics and taken to where she could be prepared for the journey. Dale and I speculated on the reasons that had induced Gole to extend to the doctor such a signal mark of favour.

As Dale considered it inadvisable that we should be seen together by Gole's messengers, he speedily left for town, at which I obtained an introduction to these persons in order that I might discover what was toward.

The two men, who were named Harris and Cartwright, I had met while they were dancing attendance on Gole. They associated business with pleasure by coming with a merry party of friends, also in Government motors, who wished to see the brainsick. I was introduced to these lively people, at which we all sat down to luncheon. When the



meal was concluded we set out to look over the asylum. Laughing, talking, love-making (the excitement of the trip had put the party into unusual spirits for that comparatively early hour of the day), the sightseers were conducted to the attendants' galleries of the many rooms in this particular building. I followed them into one or two of these, but, having no stomach for what I saw, I waited outside the other wards they visited. To provide amusement for these influential merry-makers some of the more dangerous lunatics had been loosed among the others, with consequences that are too revolting to relate.

When the diversion provided by these spectacles was exhausted, a move was made to the cells and cages in which the worst cases were confined. Here were sights which, to the sympathetic eyes of individualistic days, were painful in the extreme; instead of exciting pity in the other onlookers, they were the cause of undisguised mirth. One particular case—that of a beautiful young woman, who cowered, without a stitch of clothing on her back, in a corner of her padded cell—glued the eyes of the men to the window through which they saw this distressing spectacle. The efforts of the attendants to worry the unhappy creature with long poles raised shouts of ribald laughter from the beholders.

After tea a start was made for town; it was arranged that I was to travel in the motor by which



Mrs. Dale was to be taken to her new abode. She sat facing me, with her hands patiently folded on her lap, her eyes ever gazing into the unfathomable horror of her night of thought. For all the pathos of her mental condition, both Harris and Cartwright exchanged coarse, brutal jests on the subject of the naked woman in the cell, for the best part of the way back. They were at first surprised, finally resentful, at my not joining in their mirth. I scarcely noticed them. The deeply suffering eyes of the woman before me compelled my attention; their distressing melancholy saddened the glory of the July evening.

The sky was of a clear, Sèvres blue, save where foam-like, salmon-coloured clouds hovered over the west, like daintily attired handmaidens waiting to cheer the sun before he sought his brief summer rest. The majesty of the sky but served to enhance the desolation and hopelessness of the eastern districts of London, which we presently traversed.

As I looked on the seemingly illimitable spread of misery, desolation, and squalor, the pitiless, perhaps inevitable, methods by which the vast majority were cheated by Socialism of their birth-right of happiness and well-being were more than ever brought home to me. I left Mrs. Dale at the entrance to her new home to be haunted for many a day and night by her appealing, appalling eyes.

When I got to Gole's (he had before expressed a wish to see me at this time), I found that he was not

in, but had left a message asking me to await his return. While I waited his wife, accompanied by Mrs. Shepherd, came into the room, when I saw, to my amazement, that Mrs. Shepherd, who had hitherto been aloof with her charge, now repeatedly slapped Mrs. Gole on the back the while she called her "old girl" and like familiar terms. Nearer acquaintance told me that Mrs. Shepherd smelt of drink.

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, Gole's design was disclosed. He had engaged Mrs. Shepherd to look after his intemperate wife, so that the former should acquire the drink habit, when she would be more all too likely to betray the implicit trust with regard to Phyllis, which both Dale and I reposed in her.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SATURNALIA

DALE had spoken truly : nothing else but the certainty of the approaching end of the world had been spoken of for many days. The Government, by proclamation and by articles in the newspapers, did its best to stem the tide of credulity. Discovering its impotence, it courted favour by drifting with the stream.

For a week before the day on which the end of the world was expected at sundown, the toilers refused to work.

“What is the use of toiling when we shall not be alive to eat?” they asked of one another, with the result that their consequent idleness fed their appetite for superstition.

“We shall have to keep our eyes open on the night these idiots find out the world hasn’t come to an end,” said Dale one evening when I had visited him surreptitiously.

“Why?” I asked.

“Goodness knows what form their delirious joy will take. I only know what happened when the grain-ships arrived to relieve the last famine.”

“ You have famines !”

“ Terrible ones ; the last went on for months, and I don’t know how many of the toilers were starved to death. When it was definitely over the people went mad with delight. They broke into the girls’ seminaries—you can guess what happened.”

Dale’s words increased my fears for Phyllis, whom, for all the stratagems she and I could devise, I saw all too rarely for the unspeakable bliss her presence provided. Gole’s design with regard to Mrs. Shepherd had effected its object : she was now wholly possessed by craving for strong drink, and was therefore dominated by the father of the people, who was able to supply it in unlimited quantities. Happily, for the next five days, nothing was to be apprehended from Gole ; he had gone with all dispatch to Liverpool, where the workmen in the dockyard had suddenly thrown up work, to spend the day in worshipping the sun.

Just now our chief preoccupation was with Tew. He professed a specious friendship for Dale. He was always hanging about the entrance to Phyllis’s seminary.

I was daily engaged at the editorial offices of the *Commonweal*, where facts came to my knowledge that the public were not permitted to know. One thing was that numberless suicides were daily reported from the ranks of the toilers. Another, that whenever a man and a woman turned their backs on Socialist civilization and went to live in

the wilds (as Dale had told me frequently happened), the man's name was sent to Gole, who, if he had a grudge against the offender, had him hunted down with every circumstance of brutality. But the most amazing thing I learned was of a danger that threatened the very existence of Britain. It arose thuswise :

When the former owners of colonies in Africa and Asia had embraced Socialism, they had abandoned their possessions overseas, with the result that vast areas had relapsed into anarchy. The more war-like of their inhabitants, scenting from afar the spoils of easy conquest, had assailed the Southern coasts and Eastern borders of Europe. Their success encouraged swarms from Africa and Asia to pour into hapless Europe from all directions, led, in many instances, by white-skinned adventurers or bloodthirsty half-breeds. The ineffectual resistance made by the Socialistic communities had been such that Europe had been largely ravished, until certain States had reverted to individualism. These, headed by a military dictator (this was the handiest form of practical politics that could be devised in their extremity), had driven a wedge into the invaders, forcing some East and South, others to the coasts of the North Sea and the Channel, where, in order to secure subsistence, an invasion of England was contemplated by the strange medley of blood, faiths, and colour, of which this mass of men was composed.

Just now these hordes were quarrelling among themselves and collecting sailing craft in which to reach England when the wind should serve.

Perhaps the imminence of this carefully concealed peril was one of the reasons that urged Gole to make a supreme bid for absolute power, which Dale and those with him in our conspiracy knew the father of the people to be plotting with his wonted skill and resolution. As this intrigue developed, the gulf between the governing aristocracy and the toilers perceptibly widened ; it boded ill for these last if our plans miscarried.

The day on which the world was expected to end at sundown was when a huge batch of girls was to issue from the doors of the State seminaries in order to get, possibly husbands, certainly work of some kind from the Government. On account of the expected catastrophe, this event, at which I was present, took place a day earlier than had originally been fixed. After all I had seen of Socialism, I was not surprised to find that the members of the Government had first pick of the maidens, the more comely of whom were taken into the current equivalent of marriage offhand. These virgins were nothing loth : the unmoral atmosphere peculiar to the upbringing of numbers of girls together being scarcely conducive to the cultivation of purity and modesty. I was looked on with contempt for neglecting my opportunities in this respect—a reticence in which I was alone.

Thus, what all believed would prove their last night of life was spent by many in fleshly delights, with, owing to the expected end of the world on the morrow, every inducement to excess.

At last, with seeming tardiness, the dreaded day dawned ; a hush of infinite expectation lay over London. The nature of the cataclysm that was expected to engulf the world varied according to the imagination of the person who professed to know. The only matter at which people were at one was the certainty of the end of all things that might now come at any moment. One minute the streets would be choked with men and women, as if they found courage from mingling together ; the next not a soul was to be seen, every one having fled indoors. Terror urged them to superstitious lengths, which increased with the age of the day ; many worshipped the sun with strange rites ; others cursed their fate and, with clenched fists, shrieked anathemas at the blue sky ; others took their lives for fear of a worse fate ; all were too faint-hearted to eat or drink. As the inexorable moments passed, a sickly dread infected their bodies, which paralyzed their minds. Such was the contagion of apprehension that many suffered more anguish than they would have known if their worst forebodings were realized. Thus, with many fluctuations of every variety of fear, the evening came. When I left the deserted "centre," where I procured some food left over from yesterday, I came upon



Dale, who was anxiously seeking me. Such was the tension in men's minds that there was no fear of our being seen together. He said :

"Our conspiracy has been betrayed to Tew."

"We are lost."

"Not yet. He has offered to lead us on one condition."

"And that ?"

"That I assist him to marry Phyllis when he divorces his present wife."

"What is to be done ?"

"Temporize with him till he has to come over to us on our terms. But I want you to keep an eye on Mrs. Shepherd, as far as you can."

"Why ?"

"Gole has taken the precaution to have all the girls' seminaries carefully locked for fear of what may happen when people find out that the world isn't coming to an end."

"But he's away."

"You never know what he is at. Keep your eye on Mrs. Shepherd if she is with Mrs. Gole."

Acting on Dale's admonitions, I at once made for Mrs. Gole's with what speed I might, he following behind. Progress was slow ; streets and avenues were now filled with people, some of whom were taking tearful farewells, others (these were in a majority) were gazing earnestly at the declining sun, and measuring his lessening course with straining, fearful eyes. Many women and some

men were wailing loudly ; now and again some one would fall in either a fit or a faint, but their extremity excited neither pity nor assistance.

As I ran up the stairs to Gole's rooms I saw the jolly, red face of the sun lazily roll into the haze bordering the horizon ; in a very little while the people would learn how foolishly they had deluded themselves. When I opened the door of Gole's rooms a smell of brandy assailed my nostrils ; the next moment the gigantic figure of Tew brushed past me. His small, evil eyes were bloodshot ; his haste and tense expression of face were eloquent of desperate purpose.

I entered the room to see both Mrs. Gole and Mrs. Shepherd lying intoxicated, the one upon the floor, the other on the sofa. Mrs. Gole was in a hopeless condition ; Mrs. Shepherd was feebly whimpering. I bent my ears to catch what she was saying.

" My keys, my keys !" she mumbled. I shook her, which had the effect of making her say, " My keys ! Tew ! Phyllis ! What does he want with them ?"

I was possessed by the answer to the question she had asked. I rushed down the stairs as fast as my legs could carry me. As I descended, a great, long-continued shout, which seemed to make the earth tremble, arose from the throat of London. The sun had set. The shout was the first expression of relief from feared disaster.

Dale was waiting for me outside.

“Tew ! Where has he gone ? He passed me,” cried Dale.

“Phyllis—the nearest way,” was all I could say.

The seminary in which Phyllis was being brought up was on the site of part of what was once Grosvenor Square. Tew had already a few minutes’ start ; every moment the crowd in the streets seemed denser ; there was not a moment to lose.

But, try as we might, progress was next to impossible. Between Phyllis and ourselves was a wall of humanity many hundreds of yards thick, the human substance of which was stunned with trying to realize its immense good fortune. Our only consolation was that Tew was as much hindered as we were. Then, as if moved by a common impulse, the disposition of the people changed ; they were delirious with sudden joy. Every one shouted at the top of his or her voice ; furniture was dragged from flats to make bonfires in the streets ; the “centres ” and warehouses were plundered for meat and drink—particularly the latter—which were rapidly passed from hand to hand, the food to be devoured wolfishly, the drink swallowed greedily. Inch by inch Dale and I made trifling progress towards our coveted destination ; we were more exhausted by the deafening tumult than by the effort of forcing our way. The clamour increased. Some had got into the towers of disused churches, where they pulled the bells all together or anyhow, as fancy moved them ; others possessed themselves

of musical instruments which they had no idea of playing, but were delighted so long as they contributed to the terrifying volume of sound. The throng had become so thick that we could no longer make headway ; we were quite at the mercy of the press. Now and again a man or a woman would lose foothold, to be trampled heedlessly underfoot ; the faces about us lost their humanity ; they were expressive of horrible desires. Now and again, for no reason at all, two men would fasten their hands upon each other's throats.

Suddenly the tumult ceased ; its first frenzy was exhausted. The unexpected cessation of noise made me giddy. If I had believed that the people would regain their senses and disperse to their "centres," I was mistaken ; an infinitely more evil mood manifested itself. Everything that was now done seemed the result of deliberate intention rather than a consequence of impulse. Men and women of all ages made unrestrained, obscene gestures ; their eyes shone with lewdness. Any man or any woman would throw arms about anyone of the opposite sex to embrace them voluptuously. The brutish faces, the drab garments of the men, discounted the charm that might have been furnished by the shining eyes, the universally flowing hair, the eager lips, the inviting gestures of the women. The clamour broke out afresh, but now it was subdued to a languorous note, as if the night were dominated by sensuous longing. Women sobbed

softly owing to excess of delight ; others of their sex, surfeited with delicious kisses from complete strangers, would throw up their white arms to faint with ecstasy ; others scattered perfumes, which they had got from goodness knows where, on the heads of the crowd ; unnumbered sighs ascended to the stars ; passion-charged love words were heard on every hand.

The warm night air clung to the earth with a long, voluptuous kiss ; the world seemed embraced by loving limbs ; the universe was steeped in love. It was as much as I could do to fight against the enervating effects of my surroundings ; thoughts of my Phyllis's extremity alone kept me from succumbing to the masterful impulses generated by the dominating passion of the crowd. By now the bonfires burned merrily, casting a fitful, ruddy glow on the distorted faces. Our only means of progress lay in skirting the edge of these fires, which scorched us as we passed. By the time we had reached what I had formerly known as Bond Street, control on the part of the people was thrown to the winds ; each vied with his neighbour in unclean excess. A few yards further a crowd, even denser than any we had yet encountered, obstructed us ; it surrounded a bonfire that had been kindled in a space about a "centre." Seeing how it was impossible to get through this mass of humanity, we managed to enter the "centre," hoping to find a way out on the further side. We had to fight our way up the

stairs, which were crowded with men and women who were struggling to get a sight of what was going on in the square below. For some moments Dale and I were jammed against a window, when we could not help seeing what attracted them. About the bonfire men and women, among whom I recognized Whale, were wildly capering and uttering strange cries ; slowly, of set purpose, with infinite deliberation, they were renouncing their garments one by one till presently they were stark naked. The white flesh of the women gleamed strangely in the drabness of the London street ; their regulated indecencies were greeted with shouts of approval from those about them, many of whom commenced to do likewise, now not with deliberate intention, but mechanically, as if they could not help themselves.

Imitation excited emulation ; the world seemed possessed by a delirious desire, which was panting for every variety of expression. As if to emphasize the disorder, the cold, contemplative face of the moon hung softly in a clear sky. What further infamies these particular revellers were guilty of I do not know, for Dale and I had a way provided for us by many who were craning out of the window withdrawing to join those in the square. We found a way out on the other side of the "centre," and managed to struggle some way further towards our goal ; everywhere were to be seen men and women intoxicated with drink, possessed by a



frantic joy, the while they indulged in squalid sexual aberrations. Then Dale fiercely clutched my arm.

“Look, look !” he cried hoarsely in my ear.

I wondered what new cause for remark he could have discovered.

“Don’t you recognize the uniform ?” he asked, as he pointed out a woman in a brown frock, who was clawing at the wall of a house.

Directly I set eyes on it the recollection of a big room, with a gallery running about it, crammed with brainsick men and women (mostly women) came into my mind.

“Don’t you see ? They’ve broken into the asylum—the asylum where she—oh, my God !”

Dale’s apprehension was pitiful. I urged him forward, hoping, praying that he might be spared the sight of that which he feared to see ; but fate that night was stony-hearted. In purposefully avoiding those gathered about some women, who were leaping at one another’s throats, hyena fashion, we came upon a group of men who were frantically applauding a woman dancing with others, who were taking off their garments the while they made indescribable gestures. This one woman particularly called for remark by reason of the grave beauty of her face, which was crowned with black hair smoothed back from the broad, low brow : whatever her body was doing, her appealing, appalling eyes had nothing to do with the hideous



orgy in which the rest of her person was taking an active part. The contrast between her eyes and her actions was such that it seemed as if the soul of an angel had entered into the body of a monkey.

In a moment Dale saw. Transfixed with horror, he stood gazing straight before him with expressionless eyes, and no word of mine could arouse him. Anxious to save Phyllis, I pressed on alone. Distracting noises, perspiring, demoniacal faces, obscene sights faced me at every step ; the devil in man and woman had full play that night ; but it was the infinite deliberation of all I saw done that impressed me most. I have no longer recollection of any sequence of events in this Satanic revel ; possessed by fears for Phyllis, I only recall how a confused phantasmagoria of horrible sights now and again mingled insistently with these : men and women cutting themselves with knives, madly gesticulating, the while those about them chanted words in praise of flowing blood ; men carrying women into flats ; sometimes a big, masculine woman disappearing with a slip of a man ; always hideous shrieks and insane laughter about me, and terror for Phyllis in my heart.

At last I reached the nearest wall of her seminary, about which the waves of the Saturnalia were, happily, beating as against adamantine rock. Elderly baldheads were significantly prowling about the main entrance. A door in the wall opened, and an immense man, carrying a girl in his arms, came

into the street. No reason to look twice to see who they were ; Tew carried my adored Phyllis, who lay inert, as if she had fainted. His bulk clove a passage through the press ; he made for a building of flats, up the stairs of which I followed him.

“ Stop ! ” I cried.

He turned his head. Seeing who it was, he laughed contemptuously.

“ Stop, stop ! ” I cried again.

He seemed to reflect a moment, after which he put Phyllis down, with her head reclining against a wall. He then stretched out his arms and, for all I did to prevent him, he seized me by the throat. Culminating pain possessed my body ; my head was about to burst ; my eyes seemed to be going from my head in an agonized leave-taking. I had all but lost consciousness, when the iron hold on my throat relaxed. My eyes fell back into their sockets ; I was able to breathe convulsively.

Tew still stood before me, but in a very little while I perceived why he had been forced to release his cruel clutch. Two woman's hands, stealing from behind, had fastened their nails into the blue of his eyes ; blood ran from them, and stained his white cheeks like red wine spilled upon a tablecloth.

“ God ! God ! ” he shrieked.

Still the nails held fast as a hound's teeth in the flesh of a deer.

Presently he fell on his knees, but Phyllis still retained her hold ; after a while his hands went up to his tortured eyes ; with what strength that was left to him he raised and crossed his arms to incline his head forward upon them.

“ God ! God ! ” he moaned.

Phyllis still held fast.

I shook his coat and listened for the jingle of keys. These I discovered in a left-hand pocket. After taking them I gathered Phyllis in my arms and took her from the place.

“ Thank you, dear,” I whispered.

Her body shook.

“ It’s you I thank,” she whispered.

Her voice was sweeter than the lark’s.

Then we were immersed in the carnival of bestiality ; so foul had this become that it seemed as if the unnumbered self-renunciations of the centuries, which had been cheerfully suffered in order to eradicate the beast in man, had, thanks to the destructive effects of Socialism upon morality and religion, been offered before the throne of the Most High in vain.

## CHAPTER XV

### A LABOUR COLONY

THE train at last jolted into Rainham Station. A two-mile walk from this place would bring me to the Wennington farm colony, where Dale was now recruiting from the unhappy effects of discovering his wife at large in the saturnalia.

A doctor had certified that an immediate change was imperative ; he had been sent to Wennington, where his health was already improved. If Gole had not been still wishful of doing Dale a good turn, the doctor could have certified the necessity of his patient needing a change till the end of time, for any result it would have secured.

My train was full of women, most of whom were elderly ; they were chiefly those who, having been discarded by their temporary husbands, were now on their way to take up the work that had been allotted them, which happened to be the colony where Dale was recuperating : a few of the labour recruits were unattractive young women who had failed to secure husbands.

I watched these poor creatures as they were

marshalled on the platform ; the dismay on their faces was eloquent of foreboding for their future.

Although, it had rained all day, there were no conveyances to meet them ; the fact of their being compelled to trudge along two miles of clay mire augured ill for the life which stretched pitilessly before them.

Many of these women had been attached to "centres," where a certain refinement had been cultivated ; not a few had been forcibly separated from men they loved ; all were confronted with the prospect of brutal travail in the fields for the remainder of their days. Small wonder was it that it was a sad procession which wended its way along the drenched Essex lanes. The sight of it engendered such unlovely thoughts that I flopped along with what speed I might in order to lose sight of the forlorn, tearful-eyed women who were bound for the same destination as myself.

I passed several gangs of men at work, many of whom were harnessed to vegetable-laden carts ; others were hoeing potatoes ; a few were rick-thatching. I was surprised at seeing no women, until closer inspection told me that, to the better perform their tasks, females were garbed as men.

Here there was no shirking of work, unless on the part of the women who retained some lingering traces of comeliness. Ruthless task-masters, whip in hand, flogged those who flagged into continuing their labour for the State.

Presently I came to a biggish collection of tin huts which had dipped at different angles into the slush, until they had acquired a dissipated appearance. Here I inquired for the labour colony "centre," to be told that this was the place I sought.

While I was looking for Dale the rain stopped, the clouds broke ; there was every prospect of a fine evening. This "centre " was unlike any one I had hitherto visited : the furniture was of the roughest description. In many cases the flooring had given way on to the mud beneath ; the rooms looked damp, and smelt offensively. A farm-horse would have sniffed at being accommodated in such a place.

I found Dale in a room which, whatever its other defects, was certainly clean. Beneath the inevitable Socialistic text was something written in a clear, bold hand. It ran :

" He who worries loses a trick to fate."

" What does that mean ?" I asked of Dale, when I had inquired after his health, and told him the latest news of Phyllis.

" Those who use this room are rather an able lot," he replied. " But for trying to realize what you see written there they'd all have committed suicide long ago."

" Good God !"

" Three have done it since I've been here. And such good chaps. But what can you expect if men of considerable ability are deliberately set to debasing tasks ?"

“It’s hell,” I remarked emphatically.

“And when you see how the toilers are tyrannized over, and herded, and fed worse than beasts, you will know how foully Socialism has cheated the workers,” declared Dale.

It wanted a quarter of an hour till tea. As the sun was now shining we strolled out of doors. Sunlight made a perceptible difference in the aspect of the place. Although nothing could possibly improve the appearance of the disreputable tin dwellings, every blade of grass and leaf in hedge and trees was glistening with diamonds; hay-ricks, of which the sharply slanting roofs gave them a rakish appearance, threw the magic of their scent lavishly about them; some Plymouth Rock hens, with their barred white and black feathers, looked as if clad from head to foot in horsey tweeds.

“Yes,” resumed Dale. “There are nine of us here who are living together. But last night there were ten.”

“You mean——” I asked, alarmed.

“We don’t know yet. He hasn’t been found. His name’s Ashton, and he was by way of being a fine poet.”

Dale went on to say that Ashton was moved to sing of England’s former greatness until his talent was discovered, when he had been relegated to the Wennington farm colony, where he was set the task of cleaning out fowl-houses without the remotest prospect of his ever being able to do anything else.



Dale ended by saying that he hoped he had not taken his life, as, in the event of his having done so, Merridew, who was Ashton's great friend, might follow his example.

"What does Merridew do?" I asked.

"His vocation is to be a grim realist in fiction. And, of course, that means he's a delightfully humorous companion. He's condemned to spend his days in hoeing potatoes."

Dale told me more of the others with whom he was on terms of intimacy. Without exception they were all men who would have made their mark in an individualistic State, but who were forced by the heartless, depressing tyranny of Socialism to the lifelong performance of menial tasks.

A turn of the lane had brought us in sight of the sorry-looking "centre"; before it the women destined to work in the labour colony were formed up, while the overseers went from one to another to examine their limbs, in order to ascertain for what form of manual labour they were best fitted. It was not an edifying spectacle.

I glanced at Dale, expecting to read the horror with which the scene inspired me in his eyes; he was gazing fixedly at the stretch of broad, deep ditch which ran parallel to the road. His eyes never moved from where a tangled mass of weeds lurked at the bottom of the ditch, but he clutched my arm.

"Look! Ashton!" he gasped.

I looked, to turn away sick and giddy.

"Not a word to Merridew of what we have seen," Dale repeatedly urged on me, as we set off for the "centre."

As we approached this place men and women workers were streaming in from all directions for tea. As they arrived no effort was made to remove from their persons the dirt and sweat inseparable from toil on the land ; they waited with wolfish eyes for their food. Soon pails containing tea, and trays of slices of thick bread smeared with margarine were brought in for the ordinary workers, for which coarse food they snarled and fought like famished dogs. They would seize what they were able, when they would scurry away into a corner, to devour ravenously what they had obtained. When drink was needed the workers of either sex forced their heads into the pails amongst their thirsty comrades, in order to secure what they might. Sometimes the tea was spilled, when, on all fours, they would lap it up animal way. While those of the labour gangs who received food in proportion to the work they had accomplished waited for their doles, saliva trickled from their mouths as they watched the others tear and bite.

Dale's associates consumed their meal in a room they insisted on reserving for their own use, where they observed the decencies of life so far as their limited opportunities would permit. I was introduced to them all in turn, to be impressed by the

charm of their intellectual distinction. All being men of rare ability, their lives, by reason of the debasing nature of their work, were a long-drawn tragedy. Each, according to his disposition, extracted what comfort he was able from the reflection that "He who worries loses a trick to fate."

Merridew particularly attracted me ; although his talk was happy and careless, he would now and again pause in the middle of a laugh, at which a despairing look would fix itself on his face. Aching, starving to express himself in words, his enforced silence bound him to a bed of lifelong torment. He, in common with the others, was painfully anxious to discover what had become of Ashton, but, happily, the presence of a visitor, such as myself, diverted the flow of his thoughts from taking a dismal course. It was sad to see how the presence of a stranger was an event of great importance in their lives. We had not much time to talk, as only half an hour was allotted for tea ; the conversation was mostly concerned with the likelihood of beating the forced labour gang at the hoeing of potatoes. There was an exception to those who sought to soften the tragedy of their lives with philosophy and emulation in the potato patch. His name was Pullen. A firm adherent of Socialism, he was let in for labour colony work owing to his deep sense of duty to the State, which made him accept his hard lot without demur.

Pullen's efforts to convert his friends, to whom

he was sincerely attached, to his ardent faith in Socialism caused good-natured amusement.

When those in charge of the labour colony "centre" discovered my association with Gole, they did their utmost to ingratiate themselves with me. A bedroom was made ready for my use; it was hinted that any of the female workers were at my disposal if I thought fit; Merridew was detached from his work to show me round the colony.

It wanted another two hours before the toilers would be free of their work; advantage was to be taken of the sticky condition of the soil to get on with the hoeing.

As Merridew piloted me hither and thither I was constantly on the look out to prevent his going to that part of the ditch where I had seen the thing that Dale had discovered. While we walked Merridew asked me a thousand and one things about the old life before telling me many interesting details of his particular associates. Two or three were scientists of rare ability; Townley was an artist, Gedge an inventor, Vale had it in him to be a consummate military strategist, whilst Bowen was an orator who was greatly feared by Gole and his supporters on account of his ability to sway crowds with his persuasive tongue. At all times Merridew waxed eloquent over his friend Ashton's genius for epic verse; had he but opportunity, Merridew had no doubt but that Ashton would have taken rank with the world's famous poets.

Presently Merridew stopped short before an oak-tree, which spread its branches some few hundred yards from the Rainham approach to the "centre."

"Has it ever struck you how certain things in nature—a running stream, a particular tree, a view of a bay in some lights, moonlight in a corner of a wood, irresistibly appeal to one's being; how watching them seems to satisfy a definite mind hunger, and, for the time being, appears to complete one?"

"Certainly. I've often remarked it," I replied.

"So it is with this tree; its strength and repose appeal to me more than I can say. When I'm very depressed I get away to it if it's possible. Its strong philosophy does no end of good."

I followed Merridew's glance, which roved appreciatingly first over its stately trunk, and then its limbs, which, as if it were the easiest thing in the world, confidently supported its burden of lesser branches and leaves.

"That tree fascinates me more than I can tell you," he presently remarked, as he turned away.

At eight all the toilers were assembled in the biggest of the huts, to hear an address from the State instructor attached to the place. His theme was the beauty and dignity which was conferred upon life by toiling for the State; for some twenty minutes he eloquently enlarged upon his subject.

As I glanced about me at the inattentive faces of the listeners, my mind went back to my churchgoing

days in the old life, when I used to listen to well-fed, comfortably housed parsons telling the poorer members of their congregations what a blessed thing it was to do their duty in that state of life into which it had pleased God to call them. Dale afterwards told me that the toilers were compelled to listen morning and evening to the words of the State instructor.

At half-past eight I joined Dale, Merridew, and the others at supper, when much anxiety was fur-tively expressed at Ashton's prolonged absence. All present were much interested in the life of the old days, with the history of which, together with many of its features, they were familiar.

All excepting Pullen harshly censured the blind fatuity of the British in surrendering the manifold blessings they enjoyed to the German despotism, which last had had the inevitable result of creating the Socialism it sought to destroy.

"But, from what I have read and been told, the contrast between rich and poor was pitiful," said Merridew. "Anything that ameliorated the condition of the disinherited was to be welcomed."

"But if the country had gone in for Tariff Reform the British workpeople would have been, not only as prosperous and well off as the Germans in a like condition, but they would have had the liberty that was theirs thrown in," I remarked.

"It wanted something more than Tariff Reform to put right what was wrong," declared Merridew.



“The world was over populated. There was not enough of the good things to go round. If the workmen of Europe had severely limited the number of their offspring, labour would have had its due from capital in a generation.”

Then the talk drifted to the missionaries of Socialism in the old days and to a book one of these had written, called “The Sorcery Shop”—a copy of which forbidden work Merridew possessed.

“Even that idealized condition of life could not go on for long,” he said. “Imagine a lot of healthy, beautiful women and men with no end of a lot of time on their hands. I understand that leisured castes were always more unmoral than those whose minds were concerned with thought for the morrow. What a heap of scandals there would have been !”

“Besides,” remarked Gedge, “apart from the question of sex, it is Nature’s design that there should be competition of some sort. If this were not provided by economic conditions men would soon provide it for themselves, with the result that some form of individualism would very soon be established. Don’t we see it in our own governing set ?”

“But Blatchford certainly made something of a point by saying that men were not altogether moved by selfish instincts, and quoting the example of Nelson to illustrate his argument,” said Pullen, as he turned to me.

“Quite so,” I replied. “Love of country was one of the most unselfish virtues we ran to. But



Socialists, in destroying patriotism, have eradicated the chief self-denying instinct those of the old days could boast."

"The chap who I pity is the eminent novelist Blatchford introduces," declared Merridew. "A fine subject for moving fiction is a society in which the ideals of the milk-and-water moralists are practised."

Other subjects were touched upon lightly, jestingly. Then a sudden gloom affected the spirits of the little assembly, much as if a black cloud had unexpectedly obscured the sunlight. Although none would acknowledge it, Ashton's absence was responsible for the depression. Those present looked furtively into each other's eyes as if to ask questions their tongues dared not voice. I had learned from Dale how this little group of comrades was remorselessly dwindling. Each, at the bottom of his heart, was wondering who would be the next, whose fate was it to be the last.

Merridew suddenly recovered his spirits. With a light tongue, which voiced a merry heart, he sought to dissipate the gloom in which the others were immersed. He argued that, as to be fed up with the good things of life was the surest way of finding certain disillusion, so, conversely, to want much was to find an abiding joy.

He seemed to persuade himself, and sought to convince others, that their misfortunes were a privilege from which consummate happiness was to be extracted.

For the best part of twenty minutes Merridew went on in this strain, introducing many quaint variations into his theme.

Suddenly he stopped: he then shook hands all round and, with a gay quip at Pullen's expense, left the room.

I had expected to see some result from Merridew's light-heartedness; there prevailed instead a deeper gloom than before. Talk was at a standstill; pipes went out and were not relit; men, of set purpose, avoided looking into one another's eyes. A little later I said good night, and went to bed. In the many public huts I had to pass before I got to my room, repulsive sights were everywhere to be seen. In every direction men and women were nearly all asleep as they lay huddled on floors and tables in their working clothes. They lay about as might cattle who were exhausted with the day's labours. All windows were closed; the emanations from their filthy garments (Dale had told me these were rarely removed), their unwashed bodies, their unclean mouths, made the air stink; it seemed to grip me by the throat. The only signs of life were on the part of men and women who were vigorously scratching themselves where vermin disturbed their peace.

I was glad to get to the isolation of my room. Although it was fairly clean, I could not sleep. My mind was possessed by all I had seen and heard at the labour colony.

To escape from my thoughts I went to the window and looked out on the night. A middle-aged moon was thinking of going to rest, as if she had convinced herself of the enduring peace of the night. But for the seeming tranquillity without, all living things who seek their prey at nightfall were astir. Bats plunged past my window ; moths and beetles fluttered with tiny thuds against the glass ; a daddy-long-legs settled impassively on my hand.

The all-wise provision of Nature, by which the efficient waxed fat on the incompetent and lazy, was in glaring contrast to the arrangements of Socialism, whereby both industrious and idle received a like reward, and thus encouraged sloth and incompetence.

Then I fell to wondering how many of the hapless women who were spending their first night under the labour colony's roof were awake, feeling heart-sick and lonely as they stared with sleepless eyes into a hopeless future.

It must have seemed bitterly cruel to these wakeful souls that, after having bestowed delights on their lovers and borne children to the State, the latter had no further use for them than to turn them out in the fields to labour like beasts.

Next I thought of the labourers who fought like famished dogs for coarse food ; of the men of ability who sought to escape the fate that was ruthlessly picking them off by a pitiful emulation in the potato-field ; lastly, of the fell sight which Dale and I had seen at the bottom of the ditch.

It was all so infamous that sleep was impossible. I caught up my hat and went out into the night.

Mystery filled the world, causing things of substance to assume fantastic shape ; an impressive array of stars had assembled to gaze wistfully at the declining moon ; a dog howled in the distance.

Presently I found myself standing before the oak to which Merridew had called my attention earlier in the evening. It no longer looked surpassingly sturdy and self-possessed ; in the faint light the tree had an ominous aspect.

Then my thoughts were insistently occupied with Merridew. I wondered if sleep had relieved him of anxiety for his friend Ashton.

As I stood there, Merridew's face and form were dimly outlined before me. It was as if he were standing a little away from the ground, with his head fixed persistently on one side ; he never stirred ; he was hatless. Try as I might, my imagination refused to dispel the creative trick it had played me : I continued to stare at what I seemed to see until my eyes were starting from my head and a clammy sweat chilled my forehead. Then, as the dog again howled in the distance, a cloud, which had mercifully veiled the moon, lifted. I had no longer any doubt.

Merridew had joined his friend.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PLEASURES OF THE PROUD

THINGS were getting exciting ; the morrow would decide if Gole would permanently fasten his yoke on the necks of the people, or whether the debasing tyranny of Socialism would be overthrown.

It was to be announced in the morning's papers that Gole's fatherhood of the people was to be conferred on him for the rest of his life. The absolute power which this decree would confer was to be supported by armed mercenaries who were being recruited abroad.

To combat this design the manifesto to the people I had written, which set forth the iniquities of Socialism, was to be placarded on the walls of London at midnight, so that the toilers could read it on their way to work. Soon afterwards Tew and Dale, the latter of whom had worked with a fierce resolution since he had discovered his wife at large in the saturnalia, were to ride in my motor to the various points where their supporters had previously assembled, and lead them to Gole's headquarters,

where they were to seize the destroyer of the people's liberties.

For the better success of our plan, Tew had extended a sullen forgiveness to me. Our chief difficulty had been to obtain arms ; although we were comparatively few, the many opposed to us had no weapons to speak of ready to hand in this unwarlike State ; any we could secure would make up for our disadvantage in respect of numbers. This trouble had been partly surmounted by our breaking into and plundering museums where ancient weapons were displayed ; thus, like a mediæval host, we were to fight, if need be, with battleaxe, spear, sword and buckler.

Gole had pressed me to be present at an entertainment that the fair Nesta was giving, presumably in honour of his political elevation on the morrow. I disliked accepting, which I did from motives of expediency ; it went against the grain to break bread with those I was seeking to overthrow ; also, I had no stomach for the diversions that previous experience of these gatherings led me to expect.

These were not nice ; the cancer of decadence was feeding lustily upon the vitals of the people I was to meet.

The infamous superstitions peculiar to degenerate indulgence had infected their minds ; to these the innocent-looking Nesta was peculiarly addicted.

As a special mark of favour, I had been bidden to a celebration of the black mass, when I had wit-



nessed all the horrid rites I had long ago read of associated with this sacrilegious abomination.

In a chapel hung with black I had seen the nude, exquisite form of the graceful Nesta stretched upon an improvised altar, when the high priestesses of this cult had solemnly performed their blasphemous ritual upon her body.

This and the nature of the revels, a specimen of which I was to witness to-night, were the more prominent symptoms of the disease from which Gole's particular associates suffered.

Although Gole had been back from Liverpool a week, he had not sought to molest Phyllis ; her father and myself had taken turns in watching all night the door of her seminary, when nothing untoward occurred. To prevent her getting harmed in the tumult that was inevitable on the morrow, she had escaped in the early evening to hide in her father's flat. It was with heart beating high with hope that I took Nesta's hand as she bade me welcome. I had never seen her looking so exquisitely pure-hearted as she did that night ; her masses of hair were braided low on her soft white neck ; her sage green frock was simply cut ; she attuned her expression to the modesty she was eager to express.

"A special greeting to you," she laughed, as her hand lingered in mine.

"Why am I thus honoured ?" I asked.

"Because we know how deeply you are attached



to the Commonweal. Is that not so?" she asked of Gole, who had approached.

He looked at me long and searchingly, with eyes which seemed to plumb the depths of my soul, before gravely replying :

"Yes, we know how deeply you are attached to the Commonweal."

His glance, his words, his manner, made me terribly uneasy, but there was nothing for it but to face it out.

"I am devoted to the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number," I replied with as much assurance as I could muster as I joined the other guests.

These numbered about forty ; they were the inner Government set, the choicest spirits of what passed for the highest society : those who could not penetrate into this social holy of holies made up for their exclusion by imitating their doings.

Presently we sat down to daintily furnished tables, when there commenced a seemingly endless procession of rare meats and good wine, the former of which were deliciously cooked ; a roast peacock served in his feathers was one of the dishes provided.

The admirable fare appeared in the nature of homage offered to Gole, who sat on a raised seat at one end of the middle table. He was more than usually aloof to-night, despite the efforts of a scarlet-lipped slip of a woman named Elsie Rickards,

who, with eyes and gestures, was doing her best to allure him. He rarely spoke, paid little attention to what was said ; his grave, far-seeing eyes, which rarely moved, stared straight before him. It was as if he were conscious of his high destiny.

The guests, for their part, seemed eager to support his dignity by every means in their power ; they only spoke when addressed by Gole. None of them ate till he did. Those who waited at table served him with an almost Oriental deference. The homage so abundantly accorded him foreshadowed the triumph he believed he would snatch on the morrow.

The company other than Gole was in high spirits ; led by the nimble-witted Nesta, epigram and paradox, bright flowers of decadence, decorated the talk.

As distinct from other "centres" I had visited there was here an atmosphere of refinement and culture ; also, there was almost an entire absence of the vulgar love-making which disfigured the other tables to which I had been bidden. Perhaps it would have been as well if sexual attraction had been more abundantly manifest. Too many of the men and women seemed to be unwholesomely familiar with those of their own sex ; two women, who flirted outrageously, were grossly conspicuous.

One toast—this proposed by Nesta—concluded the feast : she and we drank to "Destiny." Then a moveu was at once made to an adjoining hall,

which we entered by big folding-doors, to find a stage directly facing us. A few of the guests—Nesta among them—left to take part in the performance.

The body of the hall was furnished with luxurious lounges, where people sat as they listed; between these and the stage was a space, in the midst of which was a finely wrought gilt chair and footstool; these were for Gole's use. He sat immovable, solitary, dignified, significantly removed from commerce with ordinary souls. His appearance and situation were eloquent of soaring purpose; he looked another man of Destiny.

I found myself sitting next to a man named Spooner, who provided a suggestion of humour to the unwholesome surroundings.

A single-hearted, sincere man of blameless life, an ardent upholder of Socialism as opposed to other political systems, in which he was well read, he had become so used to the unholy diversions of the set in which, for no particular reasons, he mixed, that he took them quite as a matter of course, as if they were part and parcel of every-day existence.

The entertainment commenced with music of a religious nature played on stringed instruments; then programmes were handed round, but before I had time to scan these the lights went out and the performance started. The first item was a duologue which took place between a presumably innocent youth, just free of his seminary, and a full-blown,

woman of the world, who was eager for her conception of love. He, for the purposes of the little play, was ignorant of its final expression, at which she sets out to give him ample, varied, minute, and realistic instruction. The duologue was, saving its subject, well written ; the playing was admirable—too admirable ; its reception enthusiastic.

The next piece was another one-act play, costume this time, in which three men and two women, members of the ancient régime in France, who are steeped in vice, devise means by which they can best pass an idle afternoon with results satisfactory to all parties ; their infamous, unrestrained conduct would not bear hinting at.

I gave scant attention to the performances of these two plays. I was wondering if there were any particular significance in the words Nesta and Gole had spoken when I had presented myself earlier in the evening. These fears pointed the way to an immense concern for my dearly loved Phyllis ; I dreaded her absence might have been discovered by the officials of her seminary. I longed to get away from the shameless indecencies I was called upon to witness, to clasp her, if only for a few all too brief moments, in my arms. I fervently prayed that the events of the morrow would enable me to claim her as my own with no further risk of separation.

Almost before I knew it, the curtain had descended on the second play ; this time the lights were not turned up.

Then I fell to thinking how Socialism, for all the noble aims with which its more competent missionaries had been inspired, was, but for our interference, to end in a tyranny supported by an oligarchy that was rotten to the core. Gole was capable according to his lights ; but when he died chaos promised to be the lot of this once thrice-blessed England. Then——

My thoughts were interrupted by a dull glare, which threw its reflection into the hall, causing a hurried stir among the audience. It was evident that a big fire had broken out not very far from where I sat. Its situation did not arouse the faintest curiosity, but some amusement was manifested when it was passed about that a lunatic asylum had caught alight, at which I feared, with a great fear, that it might be the one in which Dale's wife was confined. The thought made me so uneasy that I took advantage of the comparative gloom to steal out in order to discover the exact locality of the fire ; but when I got to the outer doors I found them strongly guarded, and learned that by Gole's express orders no one was to leave the place. It was with a great uneasiness that I returned to my seat. I tried with poor success to still my fears by reflecting that Gole's order had nothing to do with me, but was concerned with his preparations for the morrow.

When the curtain again rose the piece had not been long under way before I recognized the play as not unlike one that the wife of Cardinal de Tencin

had rummaged from classical obscenities in order to stimulate the jaded senses of Philip the Regent.

The subject was Adam and Eve—the last too ably acted by Nesta. There was a chorus and ballet, but, as before, any description of its incidents would be impossible.

While it was in progress the fire without blazed with fierce intensity to cast a red glow on performers and audience alike ; it was as if those on the stage were dancing within sight of the Pit.

A surprise awaited the audience when they applauded at the fall of the curtain ; when this again rose Nesta was carried on in a coffin, where she lay dressed in the white robes in which it was customary for the dead to be cremated.

During the shouts of approval which greeted this display a woman, garbed as the angel Gabriel, entered to blow a blast on the trumpet she carried. Thereupon Nesta seemed to waken to life. She got out of the coffin and, attended by men and girls, who had phallic symbols embroidered on their transparent garments, commenced a dance that was supposed to represent the evolution of the passions. When its blatant obscenities were concluded the lights were turned up, and the performers, exhausted with their exertions, joined those in the hall. Wine, fruit, and flowers were brought in, when commenced a crowded hour of unbridled revelry. Men and women pelted each other with flowers ; others made wreaths to place them on



their heads ; all save Gole and myself frantically exerted themselves to escape from their pursuing, fleet-footed enemy—boredom.

Gole stood apart, contemptuous, cold, till Nesta approached him and twined her soft arms about his neck the while she essayed with her lips to thaw his blood. Her efforts were successful ; the one obstacle to the merriment of the party being removed, men and women did as they listed, careless of appearances. Suddenly the big doors at the back of the hall were thrown open, seemingly for no purpose, as for a few moments no one entered. Curiosity was faintly exhibited with what might be toward. Then, to my amazement and horror, my Phyllis entered, her whole appearance eloquent of dazed, distraught grief ; of an impulsive purpose, from which she would allow no personal consideration of safety to divert her. She wore the long flowing robe worn by girls in the seminaries ; she was hatless, and her partly disordered hair hung in charming disarray about her shoulders. Her terror-stricken eyes restlessly searched the room till they fell on Gole ; as she approached him the big folding-doors closed ominously behind her. Gole's wonted sphinx-like expression was not proof against the surprised delight he felt at the wholly unlooked-for appearance of the girl he coveted.

“ Welcome ! ” he whispered, as he sought to kiss her hand.



“My father ! my father !” she cried, ignoring, in her extremity, his intended caress.

I was so full of concern at seeing my Phyllis within this house of sin that, for the moment, I was scarcely interested in Dale’s fate.

“You forget yourself,” said Gole sternly. “We have no acknowledged fathers in our State. How do you know your father ?”

Phyllis did not appear to see the snare into which her fears had urged her. She was all concern for her father.

“My mother—the asylum—it caught fire,” faltered Phyllis. “On his going to save her, he was arrested !”

“As have been all the others who are traitors to the Commonweal !” thundered Gole.

I supposed I should have been much dismayed at the downfall of our hopes, but I was striving to consider how I could set my Phyllis free of this place.

“I know nothing of that. I only want to live and be happy with those I love,” wept Phyllis.

“How comes it you were with him ?” asked Gole.

But Phyllis did not answer ; she was looking stupidly at the flower-wreathed, wine-reeking crowd which had gathered curiously about her.

“How comes it you were with him ?” repeated Gole.

Phyllis, roused from her lethargy, replied :

"He is very dear to me. I want you to save him."

"At least you shall be saved," said Gole softly, as he advanced with hungry eyes on the girl I loved so dearly.

Then something caught in my throat. I could bear it no longer. I advanced quickly to Phyllis's side to say :

"You are dealing with me. She is my wife."

Phyllis looked up ; a glad light came into her eyes as she fell, as if seeking for protection, into my arms.

"Your wife ?" asked Gole, as his lips tightened, and a terrible look came over his face.

"My wife. We have been married four months."

"That does not prevent her from working for the Commonwealth," remarked Gole, with a hideous menace in his voice.

"And we can find her work here," laughed Nesta.

"Yes ; we can find her work here," repeated Gole, adding, as he addressed himself to me :  
 "I wish you good night."

"She is my wife ; she comes with me," I declared.

"You know the law," said Gole. "A wife must work : you must have read it for yourself."

"Yes ; I know the law," I cried. "Let me tell you——"

"No ; let me," interrupted Phyllis.

"Let me speak," I urged.

“I shall speak,” insisted Phyllis. “It is my place to tell ; then, perhaps, they will believe.”

Then, with an effort, she summoned all her courage to falter :

“You cannot make me work. I—I—I”—she hung her head, while a soft blush reddened her neck—“I am to be a mother,” she said gently, yet with a suggestion of pride in her voice, while a sweet, tender look glorified her eyes.

If I had thought that such a declaration would have softened the hearts of those about us, I was woefully mistaken : a shout of ribald laughter greeted her admission.

Of what happened next I can tell in a few words. I was torn from my Phyllis and borne down by numbers—was forced away to be arrested on suspicion of conspiring against the State.

As I was driven through the streets, all but mad with concern at Phyllis’s extremity, my confederates were posting my manifesto on the walls of London.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ORDEAL

I HAVE no idea how long I lay in prison ; if time be reckoned, by pain endured, I was there for many, many days. Dismay at the ignominious baffling of our conspiracy was as nothing to the agony of mind occasioned by fears for my dearly loved Phyllis. Try as I might to believe the contrary, I knew that Gole was merciless in his lusts. Paroxysms of helpless rage on my part were succeeded by periods of dull despair. Once I beseeched a gaoler to give me news of Phyllis, at which, with a brutal laugh, he replied :

“ Ask King Gole.”

His words all but deprived me of my remaining senses. That night it was hours before I could get any sleep. At last, from sheer exhaustion, I fell into a deep slumber. It seemed that I was again with Phyllis, and that there was no cloud upon the horizon of our ecstasy. We were sitting in our home, and her loving arms were about my neck, when——

Surely it was not Phyllis who was handling me so roughly !

I awoke to find my cell full of brutal-looking men. My hands and legs were bound, and I was then conducted along passages till we came to an iron door, through which I was thrust. Here the unaccustomed light of day hurt my eyes so that for a few moments I could not see. When I recovered my sight, I was standing on a tumbril which came third in a long procession of such vehicles. It did not take long to discover that Tew occupied the first, Dale the second, and other parties to our unhappy conspiracy the long line of carts which streamed after mine. By our side walked men in uniform, some of whom were armed ; streets, houses, and roofs were occupied with toilers of both sexes, who made no sound or motion of any kind—it was as if they were all carved in stone. Overhead, fleecy clouds sailed with a scarcely perceptible motion in an October sky ; now and again they seemed to stay their journeying in order to see what was toward. As we progressed the sea of faces grew denser, but, for all their being gathered in such numbers, they did not make a gesture or utter a sound. Their immense immobility made them appear as if they were there for no reason at all ; their silence, their colossal indifference, was exasperating. If they would only do something to break the stillness !

I had not the slightest doubt but that we were going to execution, but no pains I was doomed to endure could approach those I had suffered or was suffering on Phyllis's behalf.

If I could only see her before I died ! If I could get some assurance that her life was to be fairly free of tears and pain !

Near Westminster Bridge the press was such that now and again we were compelled to stop for a few minutes. One of these halts seemed unduly prolonged, when I saw that Tew was being dismounted from his cart. Dale, I, and the others, were quickly tumbled from ours, when we were made to shuffle, single file, in the direction of Trafalgar Square.

There the unaccustomed sight of colour smote my eyes : buildings on either side were extensively decorated with flowers, brocades, flags. As we stumbled along the crowd swallowed up the space we had made ; as before, it was silent, gestureless, expressionless.

Upon entering Trafalgar Square a strange spectacle met my gaze. So alien was it to what I had expected, that at first I scarcely believed what I saw.

Round about the plinth of the Nelson Column was a vast splash of variegated colour. As we were formed up before it, nearer inspection told me that it was composed of the different uniforms which now decorated the persons of the more prominent of the Governing class.

We prisoners were drawn up with our backs to the National Gallery ; the Nelson Column towered above us ; at its base were placed two chairs of

state, one of which was neither so high nor so imposing as the other. On either side of the chairs stood six impassive, gorgeously bedecked trumpeters with silver trumpets.

Behind, and right and left of the Column, was the imposingly clad Governing Hierarchy. The gold-laced, red coats of the newly created military officers made a brave line of scarlet on the right. Other holders of Government appointments made a long blue line on the left, and, in front of these, sitting on benches, were the State instructors (among whom I recognized Whale, who would not look in my direction) tricked out in sumptuous vestments.

Before the red line of soldiers sat Government womenfolk ; their bright-hued frocks, their jewels, which sparkled joyously in the sunlight, looked like a bunch of exotic flowers. Surrounding us, the trumpeters, the soldiers, the priests and the women, was a phalanx, many feet deep, of armed men, who, although they all wore dove-grey uniforms, carried arms peculiar to widely separated centuries. Whereas a few had firearms of the latest pattern, others shouldered the battle-axes, spears, and such like, which we prisoners had intended using. All these weapons had been brightly polished ; they made a fine show in the sunlight. Just without the phalanx on my right stood a group of men, with strangely vacant faces, who were clad in a coarse, yellow habit ; intermixed with these were stalwart members of the Governing class. Then I remembered that



the coarse, yellow garb was the material in which the male lunatics were clothed when I had accompanied Dale to the asylum where his wife was immured.

I wondered what these madmen—for such they were—were doing here ; they were all gibbering together, and, when anyone became particularly noisy, he was struck by an attendant with a loaded stick. Beyond these and the phalanx were the toilers in their thousands ; they filled the Square, the roadways, and the spaces between the houses as far as I could see ; they craned out of windows and swarmed upon the housetops ; St. Martin's Church and the National Gallery were black with humanity ; faces, faces everywhere and all, excepting the gibbering madmen, as if they were so many images for any sound or movement they made.

The spread of colour about the Column contrasted with the sober garb of the toilers ; it was as if a richly woven, garish pattern were let into an immense cloth of common, drab material.

If Gole had sought to dazzle the thoughtless by a brave show of the trappings of power, he had done well ; at the same time he had painted in bright colours the difference between the rulers and the ruled ; he had brought home to those who cared to see the inevitable separation of the people in a Socialist state into tyrants and slaves.

As I looked about at the endless spread of faces Dale whispered in my ear :

“Do you remember Salambo?”

I nodded and whispered back :

“What of Phyllis?”

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly, while a despairing look fixed itself upon his face.

I looked about me wondering, with a dull fear in my heart, how Phyllis was; if by some fortunate chance, I should see her before I died; how far she was from where I stood; how much and how often had she thought of me!

Distant martial music fell on my ears, at the which the gaily dressed women became greatly animated. It was as if the wind wantoned among a garden of flowers. Then joy bells pealed from the church towers as, preceded and followed by newly created officers of state in their gorgeous raiment, Gole appeared escorting a tall veiled woman. I wondered who she could be. It was not Nesta, as I had previously seen her amongst the other gaily-frocked women before me.

Gole was simply garbed in a dark uniform relieved by a red sword-sash, but clothes could not add to or detract from his forceful personality, of which, as he approached, I was keenly conscious.

The music stopped, whereupon those who had been sitting stood, and the trumpeters brayed prolonged blasts of welcome. As Gole and the woman who accompanied him approached the chairs of state I became more and more absorbed in his companion; it seemed that she and I had

much that was indefinable in common. Apart from this she compelled attention ; she walked as might a corpse that had been galvanized into counterfeiting the footsteps of the living. Her grave, mechanical movement gave a haunting dignity to her progress. Then, as she and Gole sat in their allotted places, the woman was unveiled by her attendants. To my unutterable amazement, Phyllis sat before me. Although she differed much from the Phyllis I had known, there was no denying it was she. Beyond an infinite wonder at her presence there, my mind was trying to account for the unmistakable alteration in her appearance. It was not occasioned by the almost barbaric splendour of her garments and adornments, but was caused by the changed appearance of her face. A large red spot on either cheek insisted on the deathlike pallor of her skin ; at first I thought her eyes were big with apprehension, but I soon saw that they contained a fearful look which remotely reminded me of the appealing, appalling expression I had seen in her mother's eyes. I essayed to cry out, but my tongue refused utterance ; although she was apparently looking hard at me, there was no hint of recognition in her glance.

When she was unveiled there arose from the vast assembly a whisper of appreciation at her surpassing beauty ; it passed from the square to the roadways, and from there to the windows and housetops. It was like the murmuring of many waters. Gole was

quick to note and take advantage of this demonstration of approval ; with a gesture both condescending and suggestive of homage, he bent down to kiss my Phyllis's hand. I was eager to see what she would do ; she did not repel his caress, but her hand remained exactly as he had bent it when he had forced his lips upon her. Then came our part in the day's doings. We were herded nearer to Gole, at which he put up his hand to enjoin silence from those immediately about him. This obtained, he with his fine voice, the sternness of which was softened by an admirably simulated admixture of pity, reminded the people of the nature of our offence, and of how it would have menaced their happiness and well-being if he had not saved them from its consequences. He ended by saying that, although we had already been adjudged guilty by the new laws of the land, our offence had been committed under the old dispensation, and, therefore, the people themselves must be the executioners of their wishes.

His words were greeted with a painfully insistent silence.

Tew's name was called ; he was conducted to within a few feet of his former friend and associate, who looked him steadily in the eyes ; these contained a wild, uncertain light which I had never noticed before.

Although my glance never wandered from Phyllis's face, my nerves were so on edge that I

was wholly conscious of everything that went on about me.

“Have you anything to say why judgment should not be passed?” asked Gole.

“I have,” replied Tew stoutly.

“Say.”

Almost before I was aware of it, Tew, by a super-human effort, freed himself of his bonds and brought out a revolver, which he had obtained from goodness knows where; with this he covered Gole. An immense stir passed over the sea of humanity; to my great joy, a more wholesome light crept into Phyllis's eyes.

“Have you anything to say against my killing you?” asked Tew.

Gole did not flinch; his composure won admiration from one who hated him as I did. With his dominating eye he looked Tew in the face as he said:

“Shoot!”

Tew cocked the revolver, but he did not fire.

The faces in the Square, the road, the windows, and on the housetops were no longer as if they were carved in stone; they betrayed an immense interest in what they saw; the vast suspense could be felt.

Doubtless Gole knew that, if by some miracle he escaped, his authority rested on the way in which he should evade his peril. A gaoler made as if he would fell Tew with a sword, but was restrained by a sign from Gole.

“Shoot!” said Gole again as he folded his arms.

Then, as Tew did not pull the trigger, he added :  
“ I dare you ! ”

Tew for a moment faltered, and that moment decided his fate. Like a lightning's flash Gole produced a pistol with which he covered the trembling Tew.

The sudden reversal of their chances of life deeply moved the spectators. To my consternation, I realized that Gole now swayed the multitude as he listed. Certain of death, I fastened my eyes the more intently on Phyllis, hoping, praying for some sign of recognition, but none came. Her indifference was worse than a thousand deaths.

Then Gole made a gesture (there was too much commotion, particularly in the direction of Parliament Street, for him to make himself heard); he seemed to ask of the assembly what should be done with Tew.

“ Death ! ” they roared back with awesome unanimity ; the expression of their desire shook the towering masonry before me.

A way was made by which Tew could reach the swarming toilers ; it led directly through the group of madmen. Then, when the keepers incited the lunatics to attack Tew I knew why they had been brought to the place of judgment. Gole had left nothing to chance.

Tew had recovered his former self-possession ; with head erect and defiance in his shifty, slightly-turned eyes he moved towards his executioners. For all



the efforts the keepers made to excite the madmen against him, they did not harm him ; they gibbered amongst themselves ; Tew passed them scathless. Neither did the toilers, whom he had now reached, molest him ; perhaps his bearing awed them, or his extremity touched their hearts. A lane was made for him that led towards Pall Mall. By the dismay on the faces of those about Gole I saw that our chances of life had improved. Although life no longer held any sweetness for me, I was burning to learn how it was that Phyllis was associated with Gole as if she were an honoured wife. But the fates, pleased at Gole's defiance of death, were bent on rewarding him for his resource. An immense commotion was heard in the direction of Parliament Street ; then, with surprising quickness, three men were passed over the heads of the crowd in Gole's direction. When they stood before him I saw that they were bleeding profusely from wounds. The sight of the blood whipped the crowd into an inconceivably sudden fury. Those about Tew at once closed upon him ; the madmen fought to get near him ; assailants and victim swayed this way and that, while shrieks of insensate rage hurt my ears. The zigzagged course of the fiercely beating arms raised about Tew marked the progress of his agony. Then a length of raw flesh, in which only the eyes seemed alive, appeared for a moment before all was over so far as Tew was concerned. A shriek of delight greeted his final disappearance.



The crowd, their appetite for blood whetted, howled wolfishly for more ; those in the windows and on the housetops gesticulated wildly ; their cries contributed to a hideous volume of sound which rent the air, and seemed to darken and make foul the sweet October day.

Meantime Gole had been conversing in quick, eager words with the wounded messengers ; whatever was toward, he was resolved that his thirst for vengeance and the crowd's for blood should be slaked.

He gave an order at which a way was made for Dale and myself that led to the howling, blood-thirsty maniacs, many of whose fingers dripped with Tew's blood.

They and the toilers had bared their arms the better to rend us, while their teeth snarled as if they would tear us with their fangs. I took a farewell look of Phyllis to see that a faint recognition of me had dawned in her eyes ; they were filled with a slight surprise the while she leaned forward with partly opened lips. Even this faint suggestion of interest in my fate made the life that was to be torn from me very, very dear ; but by what exercise of villainy could Gole have cooled her latent love for me ? I dwelt longingly upon her, but was goaded forward with a kick. As I stumbled towards death it seemed as if people were being toppled from the roofs of houses in Parliament Street ; certainly I heard shots fired quite near. I had no time to

wonder at these happenings, for Dale and I were now close to those who were waiting to fall on us ; I could see the gleam of their snarling teeth, could hear their panting breath. Two or three, as if impatient of their prey, sprang forward ; at the same moment something whizzed past my ears, and the nearest madman sprang into the air to fall convulsively on the ground with a red wound in his neck. Those about him were frenzied at the sight of his blood ; instead of attacking Dale and myself, those nearest fastened themselves on the man with the wound in his throat, and clawed at his face with their nails. Others about me fell ; bullets sang past me every moment, but, as if by a miracle, neither Dale nor I were touched.

There was a terrible stampede on the part of the toilers ; the lunatics tore at each other where they stood in an awry world of their own ; but for these, and those who were trampled underfoot in the scurrying away of the toilers, the Square and its approaches were free for a fierce combat which was momentarily getting hotter. To my infinite amazement, I saw Gole's levies were at bloody issue with swarthy Moors, lean, white-robed Arabs, lithe men the colour of chocolate, others who looked like the scum of Levantine ports, and, towering over all, huge negroes, who had stripped for the fray ; these last were running with blood from gaping wounds in their bodies.

The scourings of Asia and Africa had come to glut

their appetites on the effete civilization Socialism had fastened on Britain, which had admitted no conceivable occasion for self-defence.

Every variety of weapon was used ; some had rifles and bayonets, others spears and clubs, a few battle-axes. Some of the nobler among the Moors were clad in chain-mail. No quarter was asked for or given ; if a combatant fell his brains were dashed out when opportunity served. Now and again, mingling in the fray, were almond-eyed Chinamen, who, with long, merciless, curved knives, were disembowelling the fallen. At all times the toilers in upper rooms and on roofs were being thrown into the street. Dale and I essayed to look for Phyllis, but there was no sign of her. The state chairs that she and Gole had occupied were vacant ; their emptiness was emphasized by the corpses that were heaped about them. Dale and I would have picked up stray arms with which to defend ourselves while seeking her out, but our legs and arms were bound ; we begged of Gole's levies to unbind us, but they were too intent on killing to take any heed. There was every need of their valour. Each moment their assailants were reinforced by Asians or Africans thirsting for blood and spoil.

Then two men, who were fighting three negroes, were overcome by being stabbed in turn from behind by the stealthy Chinamen with the merciless, curved knives. In falling they stumbled against Dale and knocked him over ; at the same moment my foot

slipped on the pavement, which was now running with blood. I saw the china-looking whites of a black man's eyes gleaming over me, his bloody battle-axe raised high above my head. I closed my eyes while I involuntarily clenched my teeth and fingers. But no annihilating blow fell. I heard a sickening thud, was conscious of something warm and sticky spurting over my eyes, and that is all I remember.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CHAOS

I COULD not breathe. I gasped for breath. Something deliciously soft lay on my lips. A confused remembrance of all I had seen and endured was projected on the blank of my mind. "Phyllis, Phyllis!" I groaned in agony of spirit, at which the soft something fastened itself the more eagerly on my mouth. I struggled for air when a voice that stirred my being whispered :

"Hush, sweetheart!"

I brushed a length of scented hair from about my eyes, to see Phyllis—my beloved Phyllis—beside me.

"Phyllis! Dear, dear Phyllis!" I cried.

"Hush, love! There is danger. Hush!"

Then I remembered everything. I sat bolt upright. Although the night was faintly lit by a young moon, she must have noticed a fearful questioning in my face, for she said :

"You have nothing to grieve over."

"Sure? Are you sure?" I asked eagerly.

"Is it a thing I should lie about to you?" she asked, with flashing eye.

“Thank God ! thank God !” I murmured, with an immense fervour, while the unguents with which her body had been rubbed earlier in the day made my senses heavy.

“Thank God ! thank God !” she echoed. “But it was a narrow escape,” she added, as her soft, warm body nestled against my heart.

I could have cried aloud with thankfulness. I sought to question her on her escape, her seeming indifference to my fate in the Square, her presence with Gole, a thousand things, but she would not tell me then.

“There is great danger ; they are searching for me, and those fierce men are everywhere. And father is——”

“What——”

The tramp of feet came nearer ; lights dazzled my eyes. Phyllis lay as though dead, whilst I did likewise.

We were surrounded by a group of what I afterwards saw were gigantic negroes.

“A woman, and young,” said one.

“Dead !” said another.

“What of dat ?” laughed a third.

“But oders are alive,” urged another.

They hesitated for a moment, while my heart stopped at the fell danger which menaced Phyllis. But a female body a few yards away stirred, at which the black men pounced on her and carried her off the Square, cruelly wounded as she was.

We could see the moonlight on their white teeth as they laughed softly, hideously to themselves.

Phyllis was almost dead with terror. It was some while before I could revive her.

"I was such a long time searching for you and father," she pleaded, to extenuate her weakness. "And then I thought you both dead, and—and—finding you alive, and then this——"

I reassured her with loving words. When she was well enough we crawled over to Dale. He also had escaped unhurt, but he was much shaken by all he had endured. When it seemed fairly safe we crept into the shadow of one of the lions, where, in whispers, we discussed the best thing to be done.

The night was yet young; we decided that, when the invaders were sleeping after their orgy of lust and bloodshed, we would try and get food before ascertaining if the motor-car which had been devoted to my use before I was arrested was still in the same place and in working order. Mercifully we found bread, meat, and drink on the persons of Gole's dead mercenaries, otherwise I verily believed we should have died of exhaustion. It was after eating and drinking that Phyllis told me of how she had mercifully escaped Gole's lust. Although Dale was well within hearing, he did not listen. He was still overwhelmed by the terrible death of his much-loved wife, who had perished in the flames of the burning asylum.

I learned that, when I was overcome and arrested



in a doorway, where the effects of the drug she had swallowed gradually disappeared, shortly to find refuge in a cellar, from which concealment she had emerged at nightfall to look for her loved ones in the Square, where, before the drug had been forced on her, she had learned they would be brought to trial.

Although we waited for the best part of two hours, the tumult did not abate. In every direction fires had broken out, by the light of which the invaders continued their orgy of rape, plunder, and murder. Doubtless the reputed riches of London having proved illusive, their ire was stimulated by disappointment. At last we judged it advisable to take advantage of the comparative darkness to achieve our immediate purpose before daylight came. We had to step warily, not only to escape those who were ravening for prey, but to avoid stumbling on foully mutilated male and female bodies. At every turn the glassy eyes of the dead stared at us reproachfully for being alive; the shrieks of the violated and the dying rasped our nerves. London was given over to as merciless a sack as had ever fouled the records of humanity. Asia and Africa were drinking deeply of revenge for all the wrongs, fancied and real, they had endured at white men's hands. To my distorted senses it was as if emissaries of hell were devastating the world with fire and sword. Flames shone strangely on the coloured bodies of the men, the white forms

of their victims. That night I saw sights and heard sounds which seemed to deny the existence of a merciful Providence. Once we were discovered, but at that moment the door of a girls' seminary was forced, which diverted the attention of those who would otherwise have ravished Phyllis from my side. As we hastened away we saw them issuing forth with screaming, struggling girls of all ages in their arms.

To our unspeakable thankfulness, we found the motor in admirable order ; we thought it wise to set out at once.

It was a ticklish business. Bullets whistled over and about us ; now and again we were all but overturned by piles of dead and dying in the roadway. More than once the darker skinned of the invaders would stop in their rapine to prostrate themselves as we passed, they conceiving the motor to be a species of god. As we journeyed a panorama of horror unfolded itself ; it was painted with hideous unanimity in colours of blood. For miles charred or mutilated bodies marked one of the tracks by which the invaders had advanced on London ; occasionally we would come upon detached parties of those who, glutted with carnage, their bodies as red as if they had been bathed in blood, stared stupidly as we passed. Frequently we would come on a fiercely burning building, into which men of colour would now and again throw a male captive. That night there seemed no place for pity in the

before Phyllis's eyes on the night of Nesta's orgy, she was taken away and locked in a dark bedroom, from which there was no escape. She was in terror-stricken despair, when the door opened, and a woman entered, who breathlessly asked Phyllis if she would change frocks with the intruder, and leave her with Gole, who would be coming at any moment to achieve his purpose. The woman, who was called Elsie Rickards, was madly in love with Gole, and, by changing places in the dark with Phyllis, saw a ready means of satisfying her longings. Phyllis, suspecting some new infamy, had hesitated, at which the love-sick woman had forcibly exchanged her outer garments for Phyllis's, and had bundled her out of the room, telling her as she did so of a means of escape. To Phyllis's amazement and thankfulness, she had got clean away, but, for the best part of a week, she had been at her wits' ends to elude Gole's far-reaching clutch ; his appetite had been sharpened by the manner in which he had been cheated. Phyllis had got away to the country, where a woman had taken compassion upon her, till she was finally discovered by Gole's emissaries. By the time she was taken back to London great changes had taken place. Gole was dictator ; his immediate hangers-on were gorgeously bedecked officers of state, with despotic powers in their respective departments. But it was in Gole that the greatest alteration had occurred. He was no longer his cold, calm self ; he seemed to be intoxicated with

his newly acquired dignity. One of its manifestations was an overmastering passion for the girl who had eluded him when he had believed himself sure of her. He had divorced his wife. He angrily refused to believe that Phyllis was married, or that there promised to be a natural consequence of this union. He would not admit that former events could in any way affect the satisfaction of his desires, which, so far as Phyllis was concerned, were, on account of his passion and her refinement, to marry her in the hope of founding a dynasty.

By the time she was taken to London every preparation for the wedding had been made. It took place but a very few minutes before I was brought to trial. Phyllis had literally fought to escape the fate Gole had designed for her ; she had only succumbed when she had been forced to swallow a drug that had projected her into a dream-existence in which she had lost control of her faculties ; this accounted for her indifference to my extremity in the Square, although she said that while she was there it seemed as if something were violently tugging at her heart-strings.

How she had escaped when the invaders commenced their attack she scarcely knew ; Gole had striven to protect her. When he was drawn into the fray she had escaped with the ecclesiastics, but these, in their long robes and shaven faces, had been mistaken for women, and many of the portliest had been carried off by black men. Phyllis had hidden

"I can bear it no longer," Dale groaned. "Let us die and get it over."

"But Phyllis !"

"God forgive me ! I'd forgotten her," cried Dale, as he pulled the lever and essayed to start. The machine refused to move.

In our despair we got out, to catch sight of Gole's approaching motor behind, while well down the hill in front we saw what appeared to be a group of Chinamen about a blazing fire which covered the width of roadway.

I told Phyllis to escape, but she would not leave me. We all waited for the worst.

Gole was all but on us ; I could see his eyes, which gleamed like lesser lights of his motor. I wondered he did not stop to pick us off. He was now abreast, but he did not slacken speed. His unearthly, burning eyes looked steadfastly before him as he sped down the hill, narrowly missing our car in his progress ; even as he passed, I was sensible of his overmastering individuality.

"Don't you see ?" gasped Dale.

"What ?"

"He's mad. It's turned his brain. Good God !"

Dale's exclamation was caused by Gole's motor, which was rapidly and deliberately approaching the great fire in the road. A moment or two later the flames leaped up ; a loud report was heard, followed by lesser ones ; a shower of sparks, a quick dispersal

of the Chinamen, and Gole was neither better nor worse off than the meanest of the day's victims.

The following night Dale, Phyllis, and I were on board a ten-ton yacht, steering for Normandy as well as we were able, where we believed we could find harbourage for our weary souls. The wind was fair. I held the sheet and looked after the tiller. Phyllis was lying asleep wrapped in a spare sail ; her calm breathing was eloquent of our comparative safety from harm. Dale, his fine face aglow with emotion, gazed in the direction of the land, over which lay a dull, red glare. My time was fully occupied in avoiding the abandoned craft of the invaders, many of which had got adrift.

"To think that all the passionate strivings for liberty should have ended in this !" exclaimed Dale. "That the blood of countless martyrs to freedom should have been spilled in vain. There is only one dominant force, and that Natural Law, and those who would oppose its rulings are doomed to perish. Socialism was, in my ancestor's words, the Master Beast we knew, but it kicked against Nature's pricks till a stronger Master Beast has come along and devoured the weaker. So it was, and so it will ever be. Nature's laws are the Master Beast of Master Beasts. Those who run counter to its ruling, as did Socialism, miserably perish."

"If it had not been for Gole !" I began.



world ; it was wholly possessed by the powers of evil.

We were on the Chatham road ; we were making for Folkestone, where Dale believed he could get a small yacht in which we could escape across the Channel, if there were anything approaching a favourable wind. As we journeyed we were more than once sensible that a motor was following. The wind was behind ; now and again we would hear a distant snorting ; more than once we caught a glimpse of a persistently advancing reflection in the sky. Then our motor stopped dead ; it obstinately refused to move. Dale took a light, and groped in the motor's bowels. He tested the accumulator with the voltmeter, to find that the former had run down ; this being the cause of the stop, all that was necessary to be done was to change the wires to the spare accumulator, which Dale at once did. It was well that it was such an easy matter to put right what was amiss ; the motor that had been approaching from behind all but overtook us. At the same time, I was possessed by a curious lessening of vitality, which was a dimly familiar sensation. As we started I learned the reason. We had been all but overtaken by Gole, who, hatless, white-haired, livid, drove a motor the while his eyes stared before him. He was alone ; merciless as fate, he was bent on stalking us. He did not seem inclined to take advantage of the superior speed of his motor ; he travelled behind at a steady pace, neither lessening



nor increasing his distance from us. He was biding his time, revengefully prolonging our agony. Although he was one to two, three rifle-barrels, which now and again gleamed as we passed the never-ending fires, stood ready to hand at his side. At any moment we might expect to be shot in the back.

As if to make a pitiful effort to save Phyllis, I insisted on her sitting before me as Dale steered, so that my body might offer some resistance to the death-laden bullet. Thus we sped through the night, love unspeakable in the car, and death following behind. I held Phyllis's hand in mine; it was as much as she could do to prevent hers from unduly trembling; any moment might prove our last. Once or twice we tried increasing our speed, but it was of no use; Gole regulated his by ours, with the result that he preserved much the same distance between the two cars.

We passed Gravesend—now a pitiful mixture of burned bodies and charred ruins, with a horrible smell of roasting human flesh in the air—to take the gentle inclines leading to the steep hill which runs into Strood. For miled upon mile Phyllis's hand trembled in mine; for seemingly eternities of suspense Gole was intent on exquisitely prolonging our death agony. If he would only shoot and have done! On the summit of Strood Hill, Dale brought the motor to an abrupt standstill.

“What the——” I began.

But Dale was wound up, and would not let me speak.

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"But the awful cost of it," I remarked.

"Ah! The cost, the cost! And the cost to me!" he cried.

Agony at his cruel bereavement stabbed his soul to the quick; the scars that seared his heart opened and bled afresh. He buried his face in his hands. And as the wind urged us from land the dull, red glow which lay over England grew even deeper. It was as if she was engulfed in the wrath of God.

Happily for me, Phyllis, whose approaching motherhood crowned her as with a halo, slept peacefully on.

THE END



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